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DRAGON™

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DRAGON™

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ZE PLANES! ZE PLANES!

I'm so excited, I can hardly stand it. I might sound like a shill this month, but I'm genuinely not trying to. It's just that this month, my favorite book of all comes out: *Manual of the Planes*.

In 3rd Edition, I used this book more than any other, except the *Player's Handbook*. I used it more than my DMG, more than my *Monster Manual*. That's right. I dipped into *Manual of the Planes* more than two of the three core books. That's no knock on those fine books—it's just that I found more inspiration, more great ideas, and more adventure potential in *Manual of the Planes* than anywhere else.

You see, for me, there's just nothing more intriguing than the possibility of worlds beyond our own. It's one of the things that sets D&D apart from other fantasy properties, to me. Sure, lots of fantasy novels and other RPGs have utilized the idea that there are multiple worlds out there, each crazier than the one before. But D&D took that concept and dialed it up so high, we broke the knob.

Back in the 2E days, we did it with **Planescape**, proposing infinite planes, each infinitely large. In 3E we made that cosmology the core. And then in 4th Edition, we took that concept and refined it. Rather than infinite planes, we have just five (well, six if you include the Far Realm), but each one of those—and especially the Astral Sea and the Elemental Chaos—has as much, if not more, adventure potential than before.


Anything is possible out there in the planes. Anything!

I remember one instance in particular. My PCs were running through a dungeon of yuan-ti cultists, and I wanted to make one of their worship rooms more

memorable. I decided it needed a giant pool in the middle, which had a connection to the Elemental Plane of Water (in 4th Edition terms, a connection to a region of water in the Elemental Chaos). As the PCs entered the room, they had to deal with yuan-ti abominations on the shore, water-walking yuan-ti archers darting across the pool, water weirds that attacked when the PCs drew near the water or tried to get at the archers, and best of all, gouts of super-heated steam that would geyser up occasionally to douse the heroes. Good times, all around.

Using planar concepts and implementing them has never been easier. One of the goals of 4th Edition was to make the planes more accessible at all levels of play. That's one of the reasons we have several recurring features in *Dragon* devoted to the planes. The *Demonomicon of Iggwilv* will continue to feature prominently in the magazine, as will the *Codex of Betrayal*. This month, we're introducing *Lords of Chaos*, which will detail new primordials, beginning with Mual-tar the Thunder Serpent. And coming soon, we'll bring you the *Court of Stars* series, which will detail new archfey.

So yes, I'm excited. I plan to spend some quality time with the *Manual of the Planes* in the coming weeks. But what about you? What's your favorite supplement of all time, in any edition? And what's your favorite extraplanar adventure story? Send us your favorites at dndinsider@wizards.com. And send us your submissions for new articles in our planar series to submissions@wizards.com.





HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVANTS: AGENTS OF TIAMAT

by Robert J. Schwalb

illustrations by Eva Widermann

CHROMATIC DRAGONS are the greatest of Tiamat's mortal servants, but they are by no means the only ones who venerate the Dark Lady of Avarice. This article presents new villainous servants dedicated to Tiamat, all sharing the same greed and evil found in the goddess's most vile thralls.

Each entry includes a description of the villain; his or her background, immediate goals, and underlying motivation; and tips for incorporating the villain's plot into your games. None of these characters are equipped with magic items, though you can add such as needed, using items from the expected treasure for encounters featuring these characters.

ANDRED WORMBLADE

"Do what you want with the prisoners, but everyone gets an equal share of the plunder."

The Red Wyrms Company has a checkered history. No one denies its military might or refutes the tactical genius of its commander. However, Andred and his followers despoil the battlefield after winning, coloring the company's reputation such that even desperate rulers are reluctant to sign the company on. The Red Wyrms take "to the victor go the spoils" to an obscene degree, stripping the dead of everything of even passing value. After taking whatever they can carry, these mercenaries destroy everything else.

OCCUPATION AND HISTORY

Andred Wormblade commands this band of for-hire raiders and killers. A man of modest birth, he joined the company a decade ago as a simple spearman. He fought alongside dozens of other nameless warriors who lived and died for a few silver pieces each week. Enamored of the promise of wealth from such a career, Andred rose quickly through the ranks. He impressed his commanding officer with fanatical zeal and bloodthirstiness in combat, attaining a higher place with each engagement. Finally, Andred became the commander's second.

What Andred never realized was how much of the wealth that came into the company the commander kept for himself. Had the old man fought in the ranks along with everyone else, Andred might have excused such selfishness. But everyone knew the commander was a coward who left the hard decisions to those in the field. Andred's respect for his superior officer withered, and his resentment grew.

When not attending the commander, Andred retreated to the dregs of the unit. There, he fomented discontent, revealing to all the worst excesses of their

leader and how the commander had cheated them out of their fair share. Before long, Andred gathered a group of bitter followers who saw in the charismatic young officer a chance to get the revenge they craved. When he felt sure he had the numbers on his side, Andred and a select few soldiers crept into the tents of the other officers as they slept and stabbed them with poisoned blades. This act of skulking treason earned Andred his moniker of Wormblade.

With the leaders removed, Andred took charge of the Red Wyrms. He declared that each member of the company should receive an equal share of pay for any contract. Realizing that this might spread the pay thin, he also impressed upon his soldiers the need to provide for themselves: It was their right to take what they wanted from those they defeated. So the Red Wyrms Company began its slide into savagery. Each member sought to outdo the others in robbing their victims. Now the entire unit descends on its foes like a swarm of locusts, leaving nothing but ruin in its wake.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Andred is a muscular man standing just over 6 feet tall. His features are plain, with a slightly bulbous nose and wide lips. His eyes are dead gray, without a hint of compassion. He wears piecemeal plate armor taken from his victims. A crude rendering of a red dragon adorns his left pauldron, and his helmet is wrought to resemble a roaring dragon. From his shoulders hangs a tattered gray cloak, clasped with his badge of office—an enameled red dragon in flight.

ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS

Had not Andred murdered his predecessor, he would have eventually taken command of the Red Wyrms through his combat prowess. He is born to war and can dissect a battlefield with ease, knowing just where to place his troops for maximum effect. His sharp mind also aids in negotiation, giving him an

edge when dealing with prospective employers to ensure that he receives the best pay possible.

VALUES AND MOTIVATIONS

The acquisition of wealth drives Andred. He doesn't have a particular love for coin, but he sees it as proof of his success. Heaps of gold and treasure show his worth and his skill at arms, putting tangible value on his place in the world. Andred respects the wealthy, but only if they deserve the trappings they enjoy. Those who cannot hold onto their riches certainly don't deserve to keep them.

PERSONALITY

Andred lacks compassion, empathy, or any of the interpersonal skills that make great leaders. Instead, he has a shrewdness that helps him circumvent any problems by anticipating them beforehand. He comes off as cold and soulless. His soldiers respect and fear him, but none would choose to spend time with him.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

When studying a difficult problem, Andred closes his eyes, purses his lips, and hums a tuneless song. He might do so for several minutes at a time if faced with a tough challenge.

USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

As commander of a decorated mercenary company, Andred knows a great deal about geography and history. Provided he's not fighting the PCs, he could be a useful source of information about the region.

USING THIS VILLAIN

Andred makes a good lieutenant, a suitable low-level agent in the service of a more powerful villain. He doesn't care whom his company serves, so he can be found in the employ of masters ranging from the worst despots to naïve but beloved rulers.

Andred Wormblade Level 6 Elite Soldier (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 500**Initiative** +5 **Senses Perception** +8**Foment Savagery** aura 2; allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied targets.**HP** 140; **Bloodied** 70; see also *kill them all***AC** 23; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17**Saving Throws** +2**Speed** 5**Action Points** 1⬇ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

Melee 1; +13 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Andred's next turn.

⬇ **Leading Strike** (standard; requires longsword; at-will)♦ **Weapon**

Andred makes a longsword attack, and one ally within 3 squares of him makes a melee basic attack as a free action.

⬅ **Kill Them All** (minor; recharges when first bloodied)

Close burst 5; targets two allies in burst; the target makes a charge attack as a free action.

Bloody Reward (immediate reaction, when an ally within 5 squares of Andred bloodies an enemy; at-will)

The triggering ally gains 5 temporary hit points and can shift 1 square as a free action.

Victor's Spoils (free, when Andred reduces an enemy to 0 hit points; encounter) ♦ **Healing**

Andred spends a healing surge and regains 35 hit points, and each ally adjacent to him gains 10 temporary hit points.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common**Skills** Bluff +9, History +12, Insight +8, Intimidate +9**Str** 19 (+7) **Dex** 10 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+3)**Con** 14 (+5) **Int** 18 (+7) **Cha** 13 (+4)**Equipment** plate armor, heavy shield, longsword, banner

Ghedrin the Blasphemer

"Blasphemer? Yes, I suppose I am. With that out of the way, let's get down to business, shall we?"

Little love is lost between tieflings and dragonborn, and the centuries since the wars between their peoples have done little to soften old grudges between some of them. Dragonborn might look darkly upon one of their kind who sets out to study the practices

of Bael Turath. But if a dragonborn sells his honor with tradition, his soul for infernal knowledge, the title "blasphemer" is among milder epithets others of his kind might use to describe him. For Ghedrin, this word is not a slur but a mark of what he has won in his tireless search.

OCCUPATION AND HISTORY

For as long as Ghedrin can remember, he has been deeply fascinated with the past, more comfortable in the dusty tomes of history than with events in the here and now. He could spend days exploring and learning about many subjects, but one topic captivated him more than any other. War fired his mind, particularly the history of the wars between dragonborn and tieflings: the triumphs and failures, the victories and defeats. As much as the dragonborn chronicles intrigued him, he always felt that he got only part of the tale.

Ghedrin's hunger for knowledge led him down a darkened road. He consulted with the dragonborn priests of Ioun whom he could find. As willing as they were to share what they knew, Ghedrin felt they were hiding some truth. So he sought out the servants of Vecna. He prowled through shadowy reaches in search of these secretive priests, but they proved to always be a step ahead of him. Refusing to give up, he turned to the Dark Lady, asking her to reveal the secrets he sought in exchange for a period of service. It was a bargain Tiamat was all too willing to make.

Ghedrin met with the goddess's emissary, a cruel wrack abishai named Vithican, and vowed to serve the Queen of Avarice in exchange for the terrible truths of the lost tiefling empire. The abishai led him to repositories where blasphemous tomes told of fell bargains with devils, horrible sacrifices, and worse on pages sticky with blood. The more Ghedrin learned, the more he wished to experiment with the tieflings' magic. Through trials, he mastered some of the most corrupt arts of arcane power.

Satisfied at last with his knowledge, he returned to his homeland to show what he had gained. His open display of his power, however, earned him scorn and hatred. In forging a vile pact with dark forces in exchange for arcane might, he committed a sort of treachery in the eyes of good-hearted dragonborn. Other folk also feared and hated him. After slaying numerous would-be heroes who tried to capture or defeat him, Ghedrin left his home. Filled with the evil of his studies and a slave to Tiamat's foul will, he has become a terrifying drifter who brings sorrow with him wherever he goes.



PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Ghedrin is short and slender for a dragonborn, with ruddy scales and a spot of green in the center of his draconic brow. His dark pact with Tiamat required a brand on the inside of his left forearm. It consists of five diamonds arranged in a star pattern, each diamond representing a different head of the Dark Lady. Although he serves Tiamat, he's no longer willing to advertise his allegiance. He keeps his arm concealed with a leather strap wound about his body, following the fashion of an ancient society of tiefling warlocks.

ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS

Possessing a keen mind and intimate familiarity with the historical events that shaped the world, Ghedrin was his community's preeminent authority on the past. He might prefer ancient history to the present, but he has a way about him that makes even the driest subjects engaging, stimulating the imagination with his impassioned accounts. Before Ghedrin's fall, people came to him to learn, developing their own views on the more troubling issues of ancient history.

VALUES AND MOTIVATIONS

Ghedrin does have dragonborn virtues. Dedicated to the pursuit of excellence, he lacks in one area—honor. He sees no use in cleaving to dusty principles and idealistic visions of proper behavior; he knows what such adherence won his people. Ghedrin does what Ghedrin wants, consequences be damned.

In his search for knowledge and power to the exclusion of all else, Ghedrin's life is one of constant pursuit. He continually moves from one place to the next, unearthing buried lore and sifting through the ashes of the past before moving on to chase after some other historical fragment and learn its secrets. His hunger for knowledge eclipses all other concerns. He has betrayed dragonborn values before, and he'll

do it again if it means attaining an elusive bit of information.

PERSONALITY

Ghedrin is well aware of what he's become, though he conceals his allegiance. He knows he has abandoned the values upheld by Arkhosia's scions, and he doesn't care. Irreverence aside, he is charming and witty, with a flair for the dramatic. If confronted, he doesn't deny his dabbling with dark forces—in fact, he openly embraces it. Having already discarded some of his people's beliefs, he sees no treachery as beneath him. He readily abandons his allies when they are no longer useful.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Ghedrin is expressive with his hands and body. When excited, impassioned, or angry, he gestures wildly.

USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

Had not Ghedrin fallen to greed, he might have become one of the greatest historians the world has ever known. Even though he spends his time testing the limits of his powers, he still retains much of his learning. He knows a great deal about a variety of subjects, such as arcane theory, philosophy, ethics, and the like. History is his true love, though. He might share, but he keeps the deepest, most interesting secrets to himself—unless he has to trade such bits for or grander knowledge or his own survival.

USING THIS VILLAIN

Ghedrin is something of an outsider within Tiamat's organization. He is not especially loyal and certainly not devout; he serves because this alliance is the only one he cannot break. Ghedrin can be found in the company of other like-minded dragonborn and even dragonspawn, but he quits his companions as soon as a mission starts to go wrong.

Ghedrin the Blasphemer		Level 12 Elite Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn		XP 1,400
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +14	
HP 198; Bloodied 99; see also <i>bloodied breath</i>		
AC 26; Fortitude 26, Reflex 22, Will 26		
Resist 10 variable (2/encounter; MM page 282)		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed 6		
Action Points 1		
⚔ Mace (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Melee 1; +19 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage.		
☼ Hurling Dragon Breath (standard; at-will) ♦ Acid, Cold, Fire, Lighting, Poison		
Ranged 10; +19 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison damage. Ghedrin chooses the damage type for each attack.		
☼ Breath Volley (standard; at-will) ♦ Acid, Cold, Fire, Lighting, Poison		
Ghedrin makes two <i>hurling dragon breath</i> attacks.		
⚡ Dragon Breath (minor; encounter) ♦ Acid, Cold, Fire, Lighting, Poison		
Close blast 3; +15 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 5 acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison damage, and ongoing 10 damage of the same type (save ends). Ghedrin chooses the damage type for each attack.		
⚡ Bloodied Breath (free, when first bloodied; encounter) ♦ Acid, Cold, Fire, Lighting, Poison		
Ghedrin's <i>breath weapon</i> recharges, and he uses it immediately.		
⚡ Conflagration Step (immediate reaction, when hit by a melee attack; encounter) ♦ Fire, Teleportation		
Close burst 1; +15 vs. Reflex; 4d6 + 5 fire damage. Ghedrin teleports 5 squares, plus 1 additional square for each target he hits with this attack.		
Dragonborn Fury (usable only while bloodied)		
Ghedrin gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Draconic	
Skills Arcana +13, Bluff +16, History +15, Intimidate +13		
Str 17 (+9)	Dex 10 (+6)	Wis 16 (+9)
Con 21 (+11)	Int 15 (+8)	Cha 20 (+11)
Equipment leather armor, mace, rod		

CYPRIO

"You don't spend the gold you steal; you keep it. Why else would you go to all the trouble to get it in the first place?"

Zosetos is the city of thieves, but none of its residents is as celebrated or as feared as the mysterious Cyprío. An accomplished cat burglar, she has broken into the city's most secure facilities and made off with its most famous treasures. Strangely, once these items vanish,

they never reappear in the black market or anywhere else. They are simply gone.

OCCUPATION AND HISTORY

Like many in the city, Cyprío was a child of the streets. She was abandoned to an uncertain fate when her mother vanished, along with scores of other women, in the "dockside murders" that paralyzed Zosetos for five years. Cyprío learned that the streets were merciless, and that no one cared what happened to one lost little girl. Anyone who wasn't willing to take what was needed to survive would die. Cyprío, at the tender age of eight, embarked on her new career as a cutpurse.

Clever and perceptive, Cyprío learned her trade by watching the more accomplished thieves work. Her small size and speed helped her filch fruit, bread, and pies from vendors, but to clothe and shelter herself, she needed gold. She honed her techniques, surviving a few close calls, and managed to make off with her first purse only a few weeks after striking out on her own. She found it hard to part with her wealth, though. Only when she had no other recourse could she spend money, preferring instead to take what she needed and tuck away her valuables in secret places.

As she grew older, her miserly ways intensified. Her sizeable hoard outgrew her preferred hiding places, forcing her to stash her treasure in locations all over the city. She gained a reputation for being able to break into any place at any time. But she was also known as a skinflint who never spread around the coin she stole. These qualities brought her to the attention of Tiamat's cult.

Cadrick Dragonsworn, a dwarf knight of Tiamat (see page 10), believed Cyprío might be able to sneak into Bahamut's temple in a nearby city and remove a relic. Cadrick didn't care what happened to the item, as long as Bahamut's priests didn't have it. He sought out Cyprío, whispered to her about the great treasures said to lie within his enemy's temple, and revealed to her the benefits of service to Tiamat.

Cyprío's greed made her unable to refuse. She burgled the temple, hiding the purloined treasure in her secret vaults. Bahamut's servants set out to recover the relic and find the thief. Cyprío begged for Cadrick's protection, which he offered—provided she continued to serve him. Fearing vengeance at the hands of Bahamut's faithful, Cyprío acceded. Now she is one of Cadrick's most reliable servants.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Slim and pretty, with bright red hair pulled back in two braids, Cyprío has pale skin with a dusting of freckles across her face. She disdains displays of wealth, donning common clothes and black leather armor when on missions. Infamous in her home city, she masks her identity behind a host of alter egos, using wigs, prosthetics, and cosmetics. She switches cover identities frequently.

ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS

Cyprío is valuable to Tiamat's cult for her talents. Whether cutting the right throat or slipping around the magical wards and defenses of an enemy temple, few can match her diverse skills and enthusiasm for her work.

VALUES AND MOTIVATIONS

Cyprío hoards treasure because of the hardships of her youth. She missed too many meals, spent too many nights shivering in the cold of an uncaring city, to spend her vast wealth heedlessly. Instead, she keeps her treasure for when she might truly need it. Somewhere, deep down, she understands she has far more coin than she could ever spend in her lifetime.

She does not intend to give up her trade. What began as a necessity for survival grew to become a way of punishing those who condemned her to the streets. Through theft, she gets back at those who couldn't be moved to lend a hand to the abandoned. If she targeted the rich and wicked, she might have



come to be thought of as a folk hero. But Cyprio blames rich and poor alike for her troubles.

Ultimately, Cyprio acts to fill a void in her heart. Having lost her mother at a young age, she finds in thievery a way to chase away the fears of her younger days. She has come to see Tiamat as a mother figure, which reinforces her devotion to the goddess. Cyprio does whatever she must to fulfill Tiamat's wishes.

PERSONALITY

Quiet and reserved, Cyprio keeps to herself and has difficulty making lasting friendships. She is affable when she wants to be, but she feels disconnected from people around her and senses the worst in whomever she meets. She's at her happiest when working.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

To show her devotion to Tiamat, Cyprio has a five-headed dragon tattoo across her back. It covers from the base of her spine up to her skull, with the red dragon head at the top.

USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

Cyprio knows little about Tiamat's dogma, and she fills the gaps in her knowledge with lore of her own invention. Her expertise lies in thievery, a skill set that makes her valuable not only to Tiamat's followers, but also to freelance thieves who need a mentor.

USING THIS VILLAIN

Cyprio is an excellent faceless adversary. Her stealthy skills, coupled with her penchant for disguises, helps her infiltrate her enemy's ranks, learn what she wants, and then disappear with no one the wiser, and everyone the poorer.

Cyprio		Level 18 Elite Lurker
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 4,000
Initiative +20		Senses Perception +17
HP 260; Bloodied 130		
AC 33; Fortitude 28, Reflex 32, Will 31		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed 6; see also tumble		
Action Points 1		
⚔ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Melee 1; +23 vs. AC; 2d4 + 7 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).		
⚔ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Ranged 5/10; +23 vs. AC; 2d4 + 7 damage.		
⚔ Double Attack (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Cyprio makes two basic attacks.		
⚔ Swift Strike (standard; usable while wielding a dagger; recharge [E]) ♦ Weapon		
Cyprio shifts 6 squares and makes a melee attack against a single enemy at any point during that movement: melee 1; +21 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 7 damage, and the target is dazed and takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends both).		
Altered Target (standard; at-will)		
Until the start of her next turn, as a free action when targeted by a melee or ranged attack, Cyprio can redirect the attack to an enemy adjacent to her. Any enemy that takes damage from such a redirected attack grants combat advantage to Cyprio until the end of her next turn.		
Combat Advantage		
Cyprio's melee and ranged attacks deal 4d6 extra damage to targets she has combat advantage against.		
Deceptive Veil (minor; at-will) ♦ Illusion		
Cyprio can disguise herself to appear as any Medium humanoid. A successful Insight check (opposed by Cyprio's Bluff check) pierces the disguise.		
Tumble (move; encounter)		
Cyprio shifts 3 squares.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common	
Skills Acrobatics +21, Athletics +14, Bluff +20, Stealth +21, Thievery +21		
Str 11 (+9)	Dex 25 (+16)	Wis 17 (+12)
Con 16 (+12)	Int 20 (+14)	Cha 22 (+15)
Equipment leather armor, 5 daggers, thieves' tools		

CADRICK DRAGONSWORN

"When they took my family, tore down the walls of my home, and plundered my vaults, I vowed revenge. Who better to support my ambition than the Dark Lady, for does she not command her servants to punish all who cross them, to allow no slight to go without proper recompense? Yes, Tiamat is my queen and my guide. Her hatred gives me strength and removes the veil from my eyes. Vengeance will be mine, by the grace of my goddess."

Most who come to Tiamat's service share her greed, indulging their avarice with her blessing. A few, though, serve Tiamat for darker reasons. For all that Tiamat lords over greed, she also is the mistress of vengeance, and those craving revenge sometimes seek her favor.

OCCUPATION AND HISTORY

Cadrick Dragonsworn is the sole survivor of the Steelsworn Clan, which drow overran with the help of their goblin thralls. The dwarves fought valiantly but lacked the numbers to staunch the flood of savage humanoids. In the end, the Steelsworn met defeat at the hands of the drow.

Cadrick should have died that day, but as the goblin tide washed over him, he cursed Moradin for failing to protect his people and called out to any god with the courage to aid him in his time of darkness. He fell, hatred burning in his heart, and drowned in the blackness of what he thought was death.

But death was not his fate. A few days later, he awoke in the ruins of his city, the dead rotting where they had fallen. Despair washed over him, but interrupting his grief came a vile fiend, a grinning venomous abishai who represented Tiamat's answer to his prayer. Reminding the defeated dwarf of his last

words, the abishai whispered that in Tiamat lay the power he needed for the revenge he sought. If Cadrick swore to serve her, Tiamat would help him make the drow pay for their crimes. Hatred clouded the dwarf's judgment. Spitting each word, he vowed his eternal service to the goddess, becoming her eternal champion to avenge his dead kin.

Cadrick has still not achieved the vengeance he was promised, for the Dark Lady ever has other plans for her favored servant. Instead, he has spent the last years fighting Bahamut's church, leading strike forces against its servants, disrupting its goals, and slaying its principals. He knows only that he makes ready for a climactic struggle that has a purpose the Dark Lady has yet to reveal. Though his ultimate goal has been delayed, Cadrick's power is growing. Tiamat waits for her champion to be truly ready before setting him loose against his sworn enemies.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Cadrick is bulky even by dwarven standards. With a thick frame, dense with muscles and scarred from frequent battles, he's every bit as tough as the mountain he resembles. He wears his black hair long, and a thick beard tumbles down his barrel chest. Each piece of his plate armor is wrought with scenes of embattled dragons and enameled in black, green, red, blue, and white. Painted on his heavy steel shield is the five-headed dragon of Tiamat.

ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS

Cadrick is a natural leader who has the charisma needed to command soldiers in war. He can inspire the most despicable villains to acts of daring, make brave the craven, and find the hidden virtue inside Tiamat's most wretched troops. He is fully aware of Tiamat's nature, and he uses his understanding along with his negotiating talents to recruit new members to the Dark Lady's cause.

VALUES AND MOTIVATIONS

Everything Cadrick does is to ready himself for the confrontation with those who laid waste to his home. His people destroyed, his city crawling with his enemies, there is nothing left for Cadrick but revenge. However, he's not content to merely march into the halls of his people and slaughter all the vile inhabitants. He doesn't plan to stop after descending into the depths of the Underdark to visit the same vengeance on the drow who ordered the attack. He plans to wipe such filth from the world so no other dwarf needs to suffer as he did—to slay gods if he needs to. His vengeance extends even to Moradin, whom Cadrick still hates. So the dwarf bides his time, building his influence and his network, gathering to him an army of loyal followers he will one day lead to bitter victory.

Despite his evil, Cadrick's ultimate goals of annihilating the drow and their goddess might give him common ground even with heroes such as the PCs. In the end, however, Cadrick's victory is Tiamat's victory—and Moradin is on Cadrick's hit list. If Cadrick ever achieves his goals, even in the death of Lolth, Tiamat's power will only be increased.

PERSONALITY

Cadrick's devotion to Tiamat is infectious. Those around him share his zeal, pushing themselves beyond their limits to complete whatever mission he sets before them. The driving force behind Cadrick's personality, though, is not affection for the goddess, but his commitment to victory and his unwillingness to quit before his enemies pay for their crimes.

Behind Cadrick's confident façade, grief consumes him. He is a shell filled with hatred. All he can see are the faces of the dead and the cruel leers of the conquerors, red with the blood of his loved ones. Life and living have lost their allure to Cadrick. The only thing that keeps him alive is Tiamat's promise.



DISTINGUISHING FEATURES


Cadrick wears a braid of red hair from his belt, cut from his dead wife. He strokes the braid when he thinks and takes comfort from its constant presence. He would be devastated if he ever lost it.

USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

Born in a dwarven fastness, Cadrick learned from a young age the secrets of craft. He is an accomplished sculptor and smith. When not leading his forces into battle or recruiting fresh meat for Tiamat's legions, he occupies his time forging weapons and armor.

USING THIS VILLAIN

Cadrick makes an ideal campaign villain. As one of Tiamat's infamous generals, he commands a vast number of soldiers, spies, and other servants. Cadrick is rarely in direct danger, for he has legions of willing minions to lay down their lives for him. For much of a campaign, Cadrick is a figure the player characters might hear about but never encounter. If he takes on a mission personally, it is of great import to Tiamat. Its fruition should shake the balance of power in the world, if not the cosmos.

Cadrick is a shadowy menace until the PCs are of sufficient power to face him. Even then, his ultimate goals, less the destruction of Moradin, might even appeal to the PCs. If Cadrick senses this, he might use this angle to further his own goals without risk to himself or his forces. In the end, however, the heroes can expect little from Cadrick except his hate and desire for vengeance. 

Cadrick Dragonsworn		Level 24 Elite Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf		XP 12,100
Initiative +16 Senses Perception +20; low-light vision		
HP 408; Bloodied 204; see also <i>beheading slash</i>		
Regeneration 10 (only while bloodied)		
AC 40; Fortitude 37, Reflex 32, Will 37		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed 5; see also <i>implacable advance</i>		
Action Points 1		
⚔ Executioner's Axe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Melee 1; +29 vs. AC; 2d12 + 8 damage (crit 3d12 + 32).		
⚔ Dread Execution (standard; requires executioner's axe; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Melee 1; +29 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage (crit 3d12 + 20), and the target grants combat advantage to all creatures until the end of Cadrick's next turn.		
⚔ End of the Line (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Cadrick makes two <i>dread execution</i> attacks.		
⚔ Beheading Slash (standard; requires executioner's axe; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ Weapon		
Melee 1; +29 vs. AC; 4d12 + 8 damage (crit 3d12 + 56). If this attack reduces the target to 0 or fewer hit points, the target takes a -5 penalty to death saving throws until the end of the encounter.		
↩ Hewing Sweep (standard; requires executioner's axe; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Close burst 1; +29 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage (crit 3d12 + 20).		
Implacable Advance (move; at-will)		
If Cadrick is marked, that condition ends. He can then shift 1 square.		
Advantageous Repositioning (free; usable when Cadrick deals damage to a target he has combat advantage against; at-will)		
Cadrick can shift 3 squares.		
Stand Your Ground		
When an effect forces Cadrick to move—through a pull, a push, or a slide—Cadrick moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock Cadrick prone, he can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.		
Alignment Evil		Languages Common, Deep Speech, Draconic, Dwarven
Skills Bluff +22, Diplomacy +22, Intimidate +22		
Str 27 (+20)	Dex 14 (+14)	Wis 26 (+20)
Con 24 (+19)	Int 19 (+16)	Cha 21 (+17)
Equipment plate armor, executioner's axe		

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb is an award-winning game designer whose recent credits include the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Player's Guide*, *Martial Power*, *Draconomicon I: Chromatic Dragons*, *Manual of the Planes*, *P2: Demon Queen's Enclave*, *Player's Handbook 2*, *Adventurer's Vault 2*, and the *EBERRON Campaign Guide*, as well as numerous articles on *D&D Insider*. Robert lives in Tennessee.



RIVEN JUSTICE: THE MERCYKILLERS

by Robert J. Schwalb

illustrations by Howard Lyon

Peg looked on from the comforting shadows in the alley as the Sons of Mercy pushed their way past through the crowded street, unaware that their quarry was but a few paces away. One cast a stern eye toward the darkness, and Peg pressed his back against the crumbling wall, ignoring his brother's squeals as the jagged stone bit into their backs. The soldiers moved out of view, the outcries and upheaval died down, and the thief loosed a breath in relief. A smile fluttered over his face—he'd gotten away with another robbery.

Like any city, Sigil's got its high-up men, its knights of the post, and everything in between. The whole town's full of folks in the cross-trade, peeling and bobbing jink wherever they can; it's just the city's music, is all. Borrowing had been easy after the Faction War split the Mercykillers, but times have gotten hard again. Too many posters wind up scragged and peeled, and rumor has it that the Leafless Tree is bearing fruit once more. Not interested in ripening on a rope, Peg had managed to keep his profile low and avoid crossing paths with the implacable Sons.

Most folk have always called Peg a bit addled: He'd snatch a purse from a clerk on the steps of the City Court with the Lady herself looking on. He always begged off, though, blaming his criminal ways on the twin brother growing out of his back. Gep, his conjoined twin, whispered in his ear, urging the young thief to do bad things all the time. Sometimes Peg ignored the voice, but he was never one to turn down a good idea—and more often than not, his brother came up with the best ideas.

Gep grumbled now, but Peg shushed him. From his pants he pulled the pouch he nicked from the basher two doors back. As he fought with the knotted drawstrings, spitting a few curses, he did not notice the shadow extending from the alley and creeping up his leg. Even his ordinarily watchful brother was distracted, offering unsolicited tips and corrections as Peg fought to open the bag. When the shadow's owner finally spoke up in a baritone voice, two voices squeaked as one in surprise.

Gep covered his shrunken face with withered hands, while Peg slowly turned to face the newcomer.

"I've been looking for you." It was the basher, the very same one who, up until a few minutes ago, owned the bag in Peg's sweating hands.

"M-m-me? Whatever for? I didn't do nothin'." Peg swung the bag behind his back.

"Bar that! You're about to have a very bad day, son, 'cause you stole from the wrong person. The Mercykillers are back, and I'm here to make sure you do the dance."

Peg turned to run. The armored fellow snatched him by his twin, and the air filled with their wails. The thief struggled, dropping the bag to cobbles made wet by fear. The Mercykiller smiled. This was what he did: dispense justice, final, sweet, and absolute.

Drifting through the multiverse, spinning in a reality of its own, is the City of Doors, Sigil. Long has this fantastic metropolis held a place of honor in the planes, for it lies at the nexus of all worlds. Anyone can leave the city for any plane, any reality, and any world, provided the proper door and the matching key. Sigil is also neutral ground, where peoples from all walks mingle and coexist in a tenuous peace. A pit fiend, accompanied by his entourage, might dine in the same common room as one of Bahamut's exarchs, neither sparing even a glance at the other. One entity keeps Sigil's people in line: the Lady of Pain. Those who cross her rarely live long enough to comment on the appropriateness of her name.

While the Lady enforces the peace, much of Sigil's governing falls to the bureaucrats. These individuals cling to power and proclaim neutrality, all while secretly serving the interests of factions the Lady herself banned years ago. Though the factions have no formal place in the city, their presence lingers still, fueling the violence and treachery that often spills out from the shadows for all to see.

Factions include the good, the bad, and anyone straddling both camps. From the Sensates to the Doomguard, they offer something for almost everyone (although not so much as before many of the factions were wiped out completely), no matter how straitlaced or deviant. Of the various factions that have risen and fallen over the long years of Sigil's existence, the Mercykillers stand alone. As hated as they are loved, as feared as they are respected, they represent the double-edged sword of absolute order, embodying the dangers of tyranny as well as the assurance of justice. The Mercykillers can be relentless adversaries or powerful patrons for emerging heroes. Groups striving to uphold and support the growth of civilization throughout the planes could do worse than allying themselves with the Mercykillers, but those who care little for established law and prefer the freedom to do what they will are bound to cross paths with these merciless avengers.

HISTORY OF THE MERCYKILLERS

The Mercykillers' long history is stained red with the blood they have spilled. Opinions about them run the gamut, from a valiant force of justice to a tyrannical organization bent on establishing a totalitarian order with them at the top.

Like most planar factions, the Mercykillers trace their roots to Sigil's troubled streets, not from one unified force but two separate groups, each intent on

bringing order to the multiverse. Ages ago, the Sons of Mercy and the Sodkillers stalked Sigil's wards. Both sought justice as an end, but they used starkly different means to get there.

Of the two, the Sons of Mercy were the more popular, since they held the multiverse to be naturally an orderly place. They saw primordials and other agents of chaos as working to unravel existence and reduce all things to the elemental soup that existed before the gods' creation. These fell influences deceive the ordinary soul, misleading mortals onto destructive paths harmful to the cosmos's framework. Those who stray from the law are not truly at fault, since outside agencies work against them. Through rehabilitation, lawbreakers can see their moral errors and correct their behavior, and ultimately be reintroduced into a normal, functioning society. Execution should be reserved only for those who have no hope of escaping corruption, those few beyond purification. Even then, death should be swift and as painless as possible.

Swift death is about the only thing on which the Sodkillers would agree with the Sons. To them, the cosmos's natural state is chaos, and only through constant pressure can order rise from disorder. The gods established the precedent: When the primordials rose up to dismantle creation, the gods fought back, shattering their armies, and drove them into the Elemental Chaos from which they came. What's good for the gods must be good for mortals too, so the Sodkillers based their entire enterprise on the systematic elimination of lawbreakers and anyone else they deemed to be order's enemies.

From time to time, the Lady of Pain trims down the factions in Sigil, announcing a number she will permit and leaving it to the organizations to sort out who will live and who will die. During the Great Upheaval, a particularly bloody chapter in Sigil's history over a thousand years ago, the Sodkillers and Sons of Mercy averted mutual annihilation by joining

forces. Although their tactics differed, the goal of an ordered universe gave the factions common ground enough to look past their differences and join forces. Extremists on both sides were tossed out or eliminated, and both groups reined in their ambitions so that they could work together. The Sons of Mercy and the Sodkillers were no more. The Mercykillers were born.

The alliance allowed the new faction to survive the upheaval and find a place in the city's political structure. To remove the more aggressive elements from Sigil's streets, the Harmonium and the Fraternity of Order arrested and passed judgment on Sigil's worst, while they recruited the Mercykillers to manage the city's infamous Prison and dispense justice as passed down to them. Depending on the crime's severity, the Sodkiller elements might string up the criminal, or the Sons of Mercy might step in, looking for a legal loophole to spare the accused and help him or her regain freedom. Still, people who wound up in the Prison were rarely seen again. The Mercykillers gained the moniker of the Red Death for their bloody business, and the name stayed with them throughout their time in the City of Doors.

The Red Death served the Lady of Pain and Sigil for nearly six centuries of relative peace, but in spite of their efforts to create and maintain order, the Mercykillers suffered difficult times after a destructive and ruinous event recalled as the Faction War. The factol, or leader, of the Fated—an ambitious and pragmatic faction devoted to survival of the fittest—sought to usurp the Lady of Pain and place his group in power. The attempted coup sparked a citywide war and nearly succeeded in defeating the city's most famous citizen, but the Lady of Pain was resourceful. With the help of adventurer allies, she thwarted the Fated and their designs, restoring order and retaining control of the city.

Several groups, including the Mercykillers, were believed annihilated in the fighting, their factols slain

and members dead or scattered. The Lady of Pain gave the rest a choice: dissolution or exile. Sigil was free from the infighting and treachery wrought by the factions and would prosper in accordance with the Lady of Pain's new design.

That the Mercykillers were no more was true to a point—few, if any, remained in the city. In fact, the Faction War exacerbated the existing conflict within the faction. The organization split along the original factions' political lines: Those members favoring beneficent wisdom over absolute justice reestablished the Sons of Mercy, while the violent and aggressive members became the Sodkillers once more.

Interestingly, the Lady of Pain permitted the reconstituted Sons of Mercy to continue in their role of running Sigil's Prison and even expanded their role to police the city streets. Meanwhile, the Sodkillers went underground. Many quit the city, furthering their agenda in the mortal world and elsewhere, but a few remain in Sigil still under the guise of the Minders' Guild, a gang of ruthless killers and bounty hunters. Although the Mercykillers no longer existed as a cohesive force in the city, cells remained throughout the cosmos: in remote villages in the world, the Shadowfell, and the Feywild, and even in a few dominions in the Astral Sea. Each cell is independent, and most cleave to a set of evolving principles from the original charter penned centuries ago (see "The Mercykiller Code" sidebar on page 16).

MERCYKILLERS LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful History check.

DC 10: The Mercykillers are a loose coalition of warriors, mercenaries, and killers, nominally united under order's banner. They patrol the cosmos enforcing laws and waging war against the agents of chaos.

DC 15: Once, the Mercykillers were the hand of justice in Sigil, but after a devastating war, they were scattered across the cosmos.

DC 20: Currently, there are three major factions associated with the Mercykillers. The Sons of Mercy is a benevolent organization that manages Sigil's Prison, carries out sentences on those found guilty, and polices the streets. The Sodkillers summarily execute anyone they find in violation of their laws. Finally, a few Mercykiller renegades collect in isolated bands whose values and goals might resemble those of the other organizations or serve some other principle entirely.

OBJECTIVES

The Mercykillers serve order, but how they go about their service and what tactics they employ to achieve their goals vary depending on the group.

SODKILLERS: ABSOLUTE ORDER

"Chaos wins if we permit free thinking and subversive ideas."

Civilization requires stern laws. The Sodkillers enforce those laws at the expense of personal freedom. Provided crime is held in check, it doesn't matter how many liberties the people must sacrifice; a stable and functioning society is far more important than individual happiness. Justice must be dispensed swiftly and should always outweigh the severity of the crime, to deter others from subverting the established order. Thus, the Sodkillers hack off hands from thieves, torture and then execute killers, and engage in other cruel activities in the name of justice.

SONS OF MERCY: JUSTICE BREEDS PEACE

"By ensuring justice is applied fairly and to all who live in the light of civilization, we all prosper."

Tyranny fomenters unrest. Justice and order must be shown to be superior alternatives to chaos and upheaval. Through law's champions, people will embrace an orderly society, for through it they can lead normal and prosperous lives. This recognition and support from the governed ensures a peaceful and secure community. Punishment should always fit the crime, and it should be dispensed fairly. Should there ever be doubt about a person's guilt, the accused should go free, for it is better to loose one hundred criminals rather than execute an innocent person.

MERCYKILLERS: WAR AGAINST CHAOS

"You know why they call us the Mercykillers? We kill mercy. When justice is soft and easy, there's no deterrent to keep the people in line."

The cosmos is at war, with the forces of law battling against the hordes of chaos. There are many battlefields in this terrible war, from desperate struggles in back alleys to great blood-soaked fields in the Elemental Chaos, and while the scale might differ, the consequences are equal. Each victory achieved by chaos threatens the established order of the multiverse. It falls to the Mercykillers to correct these imbalances, to right the course of the cosmos, and to ensure the ultimate victory of absolute order.

The Mercykillers lack the numbers to mount an effective war against their sworn foes, so they instead work in the trenches, fighting against individual agents of corruption and executing any they see as enemies of the law. They roam city streets, searching for cultists and subversives, and hunt down loosed

demons, elemental horrors, and other creatures whose mere existence troubles the fabric of reality. They show no mercy or remorse, and they use brutal violence to eradicate the foe. Total annihilation is their message, delivered by fire and sword.

ORGANIZATION PERSONALITIES

The Mercykillers include a wide range of people, from those sworn to uphold law and order to those who use justice as a means to increase their own power.

ARWYL SWAN'S SON, LEADER OF THE SONS OF MERCY

"How can there be justice without mercy?"

Arwyl Swan's Son commands the Sons of Mercy in Sigil. Through his guidance and wisdom, his followers are now seen by Sigil's people as custodians of peace and enforcers of law.

OCCUPATION AND HISTORY

Long ago, Arwyl Swan's Son was a divine champion of Torm in Toril. After chasing a fiend through a portal and becoming grievously injured in the battle, he was rescued by a Mercykiller. The stranger dazzled him with glorious tales of justice's ideal, recounting his exploits and victories against demons and other agents of chaos. When Arwyl was well enough to travel, he journeyed to Sigil to pledge service to the faction.

Not long afterward, Arwyl realized that many Mercykillers sought a brand of justice at odds with his own. Though he suspected such people sought only to serve their own evil ends, he refused to break

THE MERCYKILLER CODE

When the Sodkillers and Sons of Mercy first united, they drafted a charter to unite their members in a new vision. Although neither splinter faction still abides by the code, many Mercykiller cells still uphold and abide by some or all of these tenets.

- ◆ I will uphold Justice before all else, purging the multiverse of those who break the law.
- ◆ In all situations, I shall weigh the rights and wrongs with a clear and impartial mind.
- ◆ I shall decide where Justice must fall under the law, and I will mete out that Justice with a firm and unyielding hand.
- ◆ I believe in the righteousness of my faction; we answer alone to the higher law of Justice.
- ◆ I will not pass judgment on good or evil, only on law-abiding and lawbreaking, for therein lies wrongdoing.
- ◆ I will punish the guilty as the crime demands.
- ◆ I will be diligent in my pursuit of the guilty, and while so engaged I will remain innocent of any wrongdoing in the eyes of others.
- ◆ I will never release a lawbreaker until his or her sentence has been carried out.



his vows. So he worked within the faction to guide it toward virtue, even though he failed as often as he succeeded. When the Mercykillers collapsed during the Faction War, he was the ideal candidate to lead the newly constituted Sons of Mercy, a role he has filled for over a century.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

One would never suspect that Arwyl has just celebrated his 150th birthday: He is strong, healthy, and filled with youthful vigor. Despite his white hair, he possesses a sturdy build, bright blue eyes, and

attractive features. His great age has done nothing to diminish his fighting prowess. Arwyl owes his astonishing longevity to Torm, who bestowed the blessing to ensure his champion represents the god's interests in Sigil.

ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS

Arwyl is a skilled warrior and a devout champion of his god and of his organization. His great wisdom and natural leadership ability helped the Sons of Mercy secure a place in the new political arena that emerged after the Faction War, and thus he and his fellows continue their good work in the City of Doors.

VALUES AND MOTIVATIONS

Although committed to the Sons of Mercy, Arwyl has always put his faith and his god first, a tendency that got him in trouble when the Mercykillers were most active in Sigil. Arwyl opposes tyranny and enforces justice to ensure Sigil remains a city of laws that apply to all its citizens equally.

PERSONALITY

Arwyl dispenses justice as handed down from the authorities, but he's not a slave to the law. Under most circumstances, he advises his followers to carry out the sentence, but if the punishment exceeds the crime, or if the sentenced has been wrongly accused, Arwyl stalls or even circumvents the edicts of his superiors to ensure the sanctity of law.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

When Arwyl faces a difficult decision, he sits silently and strokes his chin for as long as he needs to find a solution.

Arwyl Swan's Son			Level 17 Elite Soldier (Leader)		
Medium natural humanoid, human			XP 3,200		
Initiative +12		Senses Perception +12			
HP 328; Bloodied 164					
AC 35; Fortitude 32, Reflex 29, Will 31					
Saving Throws +2					
Speed 5					
Action Points 1					
Ⓢ Sword of Justice (standard; at-will) ♦ Radiant, Weapon					
+24 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage, and until the end of Arwyl's next turn, if the target makes an attack that does not include Arwyl, it takes 10 radiant damage.					
Ⓡ Double Attack (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon					
Arwyl makes two <i>sword of justice</i> attacks.					
Ⓡ Mete Justice (immediate reaction, when hit by a melee attack; recharge ⓈⓈⓈⓈ) ♦ Weapon					
Requires <i>sword of justice</i> ; +24 vs. AC; 3d8 + 7 damage, and the target slides 1 square.					
Ⓡ Purifying Smite (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon					
Requires <i>sword of justice</i> ; +24 vs. AC; 4d8 + 7 damage, and the target can use only at-will powers when it attacks (save ends).					
Ⓢ Righteous Arc (standard; requires <i>sword of justice</i> ; at-will) ♦ Weapon					
Close burst 1; +24 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Arwyl's next turn.					
Alignment Lawful good			Languages Common, Supernal		
Skills Diplomacy +19, Insight +17, Religion +17, Streetwise +19					
Str 25 (+15)		Dex 14 (+10)		Wis 18 (+12)	
Con 20 (+13)		Int 19 (+12)		Cha 23 (+14)	
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, <i>sword of justice</i>					

USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

Sigil has been Arwyl's home for over a century, and the Sons' leader has connections at all levels of government and in nearly every quarter. Although he has enemies, he has more friends, many of whom owe him favors.

CRUEL SEIRRAH, LEADER OF THE SODKILLERS

"How can you keep order if you don't want to get your hands dirty?"

Seirrah carved her way up the ranks to stake her claim on the Sodkillers' leadership after her mother, Alisohn Nilesia, went missing in the Faction War's aftermath.

OCCUPATION AND HISTORY

Cruel Seirrah, as she known on the city's streets, is the illegitimate daughter of the Mercykillers' mad former commander. She commands the Sodkillers and is nominally in charge of all its derivative organizations in Sigil and beyond. Like her followers, she plays the part of mercenary, enforcer, or hired muscle as needed.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Tall, wiry, with plain features, ruddy skin, and fear-some red eyes, Seirrah has the typical characteristic of a female tiefling. Long, backward-twisting horns emerge from her forehead, and her muscled tail ends in a barbed hook.

ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS

Seirrah inherited a number of talents and capabilities from her mother. She's good with a sword and is a brilliant leader. However, she is also marked by her mother's worst qualities, making her unpredictable and vindictive.

Cruel Seirrah		Level 19 Elite Controller
Medium natural humanoid, tiefling		XP 4,800
Initiative +16		Senses Perception +12; low-light vision
HP 358; Bloodied 179		
AC 35; Fortitude 30, Reflex 35, Will 34		
Resist 14 fire		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed 6		
Action Points 1		
⬇️ Cruel Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+24 vs. AC; 1d4 + 7 damage, and the target is immobilized and takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends both).		
⬇️ Opportune Slash (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Cruel Seirrah makes a <i>cruel dagger</i> attack against an immobilized target.		
↶ Blade Spray (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Weapon		
Requires dagger; close blast 3; +24 vs. Reflex; 6d4 + 7 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).		
Infernal Wrath (minor; encounter)		
Seirrah gains a +1 power bonus to her next attack roll against an enemy that hit her since her last turn. If the attack hits and deals damage, it deals 7 extra damage.		
Mobile Cover (move; recharge ⏏ ⏏)		
Seirrah shifts 3 squares and slides 3 squares one immobilized enemy that was adjacent to her at the start of that movement. The enemy must end adjacent to Seirrah.		
Bloodhunt		
Seirrah has a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls against bloodied foes.		
Body Shield (when Seirrah is damaged by an attack while adjacent to an immobilized enemy)		
Seirrah takes half the attack's damage and one adjacent immobilized enemy of her choice takes the other half.		
Alignment Evil		Languages Common
Skills Bluff +23, Intimidate +21, Stealth +23		
Str 15 (+11)	Dex 25 (+16)	Wis 17 (+12)
Con 19 (+13)	Int 22 (+15)	Cha 24 (+16)
Equipment hide armor, 10 daggers		

VALUES AND MOTIVATIONS

The lust for power drives Seirrah. She doesn't care about order, justice, or anything of the sort; she craves authority, hungering for the security denied to her when she grew up on Sigil's streets. Memories of fear and want fill her with an unquenchable thirst to command and rule.

PERSONALITY

Seirrah is every bit as insane as her mother was. She's paranoid and cruel, using excessive force to drive home her points. She acts like a petulant child, lashing out with barely controlled rage at anyone who offends her.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

In combat, Seirrah takes her enemies alive, knocking them unconscious rather than just killing them. After the battle, she cuts a captive up slowly with a long, thin knife, all the while whispering of why he or she deserves this horrific end.

USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

Through her years on the streets, Seirrah knows every inch of Sigil's seedy underbelly, who is who and who runs what. She also has contacts within a thriving cult of Bane, of which she's a member.

ANDREZHEJ, MERCYKILLER CAPTAIN

"Broken but not defeated."

Though the Mercykillers no longer have clout in Sigil, many agents remain at large throughout the world and the planes. Andrezhej leads a nomadic band of such survivors.

Captain Andrezhej		Level 15 Soldier (Leader)
Medium immortal humanoid		XP 1,200
Initiative +10	Senses Perception +13	
Commanding Presence aura 3; allies within the aura gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls.		
HP 145; Bloodied 72		
AC 30; Fortitude 28, Reflex 26, Will 28; see also <i>astral majesty</i>		
Resist 12 necrotic and 12 radiant		
Speed 5		
⚔ Skullcrushing Mace (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+22 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage.		
☞ Star of Justice (standard; at-will) ♦ Radiant		
Ranged 5; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 6 radiant damage, and the target grants combat advantage to all enemies until the end of Andrezhej's next turn.		
⚔ Kneel Foe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Requires mace; +22 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is knocked prone.		
⚔ Mighty Smite (standard; recharge ☞ ☞) ♦ Weapon		
Requires mace; +22 vs. AC; 4d8 + 6 damage, and the target is dazed and gains vulnerable 5 radiant (save ends both).		
Memory of a Thousand Lifetimes (when Andrezhej makes an attack roll, saving throw, a skill check, or an ability check; encounter)		
Roll 1d6 and add the result to the triggering roll.		
Astral Majesty		
Captain Andrezhej gains a +1 bonus to all defenses against attacks made by bloodied creatures.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Common, Primordial, Supernal
Skills History +13, Intimidate +14, Religion +13		
Str 22 (+13)	Dex 12 (+8)	Wis 22 (+13)
Con 17 (+10)	Int 19 (+11)	Cha 15 (+9)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, mace, holy symbol		

OCCUPATION AND HISTORY

Andrezhej commands the tattered Mercykillers who escaped Sigil during the Faction War. A pariah among his former colleagues, he guides his disgraced fellows through the planes, enforcing the laws of the lands in which they travel.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Andrezhej has abnormally pale skin, white hair, and strange skin patterns, leading many to speculate about his origins. His face bears a long moustache and is marked by years of bitterness and arrogance.

ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS

Andrezhej is a competent if not brilliant commander, and he has the loyalty of all his followers. He often leads a detachment personally to complete a mission, and his presence and cunning are invaluable in achieving victory.

VALUES AND MOTIVATIONS

Andrezhej clings to the central tenets of the Mercykiller faction, embracing the law above all other considerations. He makes no distinction between laws and is uninterested in their particular merits or flaws. He sees the world in sharp contrasts, with lawkeepers such as himself on one side and lawbreakers on the other.

PERSONALITY

Andrezhej embodies the worst traits of authority, imposing his beliefs and values on all those he meets. This arrogant posture prevents himself and his cohorts from settling anywhere for long; they drift from place to place, certain that they are safeguarding the world from the troubles chaos brings.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

When angered—and he is angered easily—Andrezhej puffs up his chest and sputters with rage, his moustache quivering.

USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

Although blinded by his mission, Andrezhej knows a great deal about his faction's history. An appeal to his ego encourages him to extol the virtues of order and wax eloquent on the nigh holy purpose pursued by the Mercykillers.

THE PRISON

Until the Faction War, the Mercykillers based their operations at the Prison, where Sigil's criminals are held. Since the organization's collapse, control of the Prison has passed to the Sons of Mercy, while the Sodkillers and other Mercykiller elements have spread through the city and beyond. Still, in many minds, the Prison is a testament to the merciless nature of its former custodians, and its mere sight can send thrills of dread through those who recall the dark days of its occupation.

The Prison overlooks the Courtier's Square in the heart of The Lady's Ward, the wealthiest and most powerful district in the City of Doors. Fronting Prison Row is the walled compound's gated entrance, a looming portal protected by a full company of guards. Each wall sports two small guard towers fitted with spotlights lighting the interior and exterior. Where the walls meet at each corner stands a massive command tower, equipped with ballistas, catapults, scorpions, and fire-throwers.

Inside the walls are three baileys cordoned off by interior walls: a drilling yard, an exercise yard, and a small garden where prisoners work to feed themselves. Capping the interior walls is a walkway connecting the entrance gate to the guard towers opposite. The Sons of Mercy patrol the walkway, keeping crossbows leveled at prisoners who emerge from cells for a bit of fresh air and exercise.

Most prisoners are housed in the towers, from which escape is nearly impossible thanks to tight twisting corridors, traps, and lethal dead ends. The



OTHER IMPORTANT LOCATIONS

Although most people associate the Mercykillers and the Sons of Mercy with the Prison, several splinter groups associated with the organization use other headquarters.

TOWER OF LAW

Rising from a floating rock in the Astral Sea is the Tower of Law, a grim fortress adrift in the silvery void. Based here is a Mercykiller band that refers to itself by the old moniker of the Red Death. The tower's fifteen levels sport prisons, torture chambers, barracks, treasuries, and more, and houses two hundred loyal followers and half again as many prisoners, many of whom face punishment for crimes they didn't commit. The Red Death mounts forays into other planes by means of a permanent teleportation circle inscribed in the Vanguard Room. From there they spill through portals, striking those they accuse of whatever crime they decide upon and rounding up prisoners to face their brand of justice.

MINDERS' GUILD

After the Faction War, many Sodkillers found service in the city as assassins, mercenaries, and bounty hunters. Though they were still committed to the principle of absolute order by any means, by selling their service as hired swords they could fund missions and expeditions into the city and beyond. The Minders' Guild does not have a single headquarters but rather operates out of several taverns and winesinks scattered throughout Sigil that act as willing or unwilling fronts for the Sodkillers. Some such business owners agree with the Sodkillers' penchant for ruthlessness, while others are so afraid of the callous warriors that they are unable to turn

best-behaved prisoners have cells with narrow windows overlooking the grounds, or, if really lucky, the street. The rest must content themselves with a 5-foot-by-10-foot chamber with only a mattress and a bucket for company. Each prison tower features a spiral staircase that climbs to the tower's top and descends into the Prison's darkest abyss.

Dining halls, laundry, kitchens, storerooms, and more fill out the dungeons below the stronghold, as do the execution rooms beneath the common chambers. Though they are rarely used now, rooms are still set aside for torture, hangings, and beheadings in response to the sentences handed down from Sigil's justices.

There are whispers of darker cells yet, hideous lightless places lying forgotten far below the strong-

hold. Called the Cellars, they are legendary as a doom reserved for the worst offenders. Adamantine cages housing both living and dead are piled atop one another, forming metal mountains filled with shrieking and raving occupants. Catwalks allow attendants to bring food and water to the prisoners condemned to live out their days here, but even the most dedicated guards refuse to dwell overlong. There are things in the shadows—creeping, squealing things that pluck meals screaming through the cage bars, leaving behind only tufts of hair, blood, and a sour stench as proof of their existence.

them away. Anyone who seeks the services of a killer, needs to track down an escaped fugitive, or simply requires a bit more muscle, can find the Minders' Guild by the old Mercykiller symbol inscribed somewhere on the door or wall of their host establishment: a black winged serpent.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Use the following adventure seeds to develop stories featuring the Mercykillers or any of its descendant organizations.

HUNTED

After the adventurers cross a powerful and wealthy enemy, they find their names darkened by false accusations. They are being stalked by bounty hunters and assassins from the Minders' Guild. The longer they remain in Sigil, the more intense the attacks grow, until they are beset by enemies on all sides. Only by clearing their names and defeating the mastermind employing the Sodkillers will the heroes earn a reprieve.

FACTION WAR REDUX

Although the Sons of Mercy operate with the Lady of Pain's blessings, not all citizens are happy with the current arrangement—especially the Sodkillers, who see their rivals as usurping their rightful place in the city. Resentment blossoms into violence, beginning with the murders of a few Sons of Mercy. Arwyl Swan's Son commands his soldiers to take to the street in force and round up the Sodkillers

wherever they are found. This sparks open conflict on the streets, which quickly escalates into bloody warfare. Fearing the Lady of Pain's harsh and final involvement, members of both groups approach the PCs for assistance in finding a solution and restoring the peace.

NILESIA RETURNED

Many theories exist about what happened to Alisohn Nilesia, the Mercykillers' former leader. Some folk claim that she married into the Fated and swear that the Lady of Pain slew her in plain view. There are even whispers that she languishes still in the Nine Hells as the plaything of some devil. Neither the Sons of Mercy nor the Sodkillers want her back, since her madness was one of the principal agents in their faction's collapse. Yet when rumor spreads through Sigil of her imminent return, members from both sides flock to her banner, pledging themselves loyal servants to the Mercykillers restored. Fear ripples through the city as the swelling numbers form up into ranks and march to lay siege to the Prison, where they intend to oust the Sons of Mercy and install themselves.

PRISON BREAK

After a job goes sour, the adventurers find themselves locked up in the Prison, doomed to what many deem inescapable incarceration. Surviving their stay is tough enough with the assortment of unsavory characters held there, but when horrors start bubbling up from the Cellars to kill guard and prisoner alike, the adventurers find their chance to escape, either by fleeing in the confusion or dispatching the threat in hopes of securing a pardon.

AGENTS OF THE ORGANIZATION

Characters adventuring in Sigil and the planes are bound to come across the Mercykillers and their ilk, whether as allies or as enemies.

Son of Mercy Warden		Level 7 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 300
Initiative +5	Senses Perception +11	
HP 78; Bloodied 39		
AC 23; Fortitude 20, Reflex 18, Will 19		
Speed 5		
⬇	Bastard Sword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+14 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the Son of Mercy warden's next turn.		
⬇	Price of Crime (opportunity action, when a target marked by the Son of Mercy warden moves or shifts; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
The Son of Mercy warden makes a <i>bastard sword</i> attack against the triggering enemy.		
⬇	Compulsory Punishment (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon	
Requires bastard sword; +14 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage, and whenever the target deals damage, it takes 5 damage (save ends).		
On the Lady's Authority		
Whenever the Son of Mercy warden saves against an ongoing effect or condition with the charm or fear keywords, it can make a <i>bastard sword</i> attack against an adjacent enemy as a free action.		
Alignment Lawful good		Languages Common
Skills Intimidate +8, Streetwise +8		
Str 18 (+7)	Dex 11 (+3)	Wis 16 (+6)
Con 14 (+5)	Int 13 (+4)	Cha 11 (+3)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, bastard sword		

SON OF MERCY WARDEN

Wardens of the Sons of Mercy patrol in groups, enforcing Sigil's laws and bringing criminals to justice.

SON OF MERCY WARDEN TACTICS

Wardens surround their target, pressing the attack and striking whenever it tries to escape. All the while, they call on the foe to surrender and pay the price for its crimes.

Mercykiller Recruit	Level 8 Minion
Medium natural humanoid, orc	XP 88
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 21; Fortitude 23, Reflex 17, Will 17	
Speed 5 (7 while charging)	
⚔ Battleaxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+12 vs. AC; 5 damage.	
⚔ Headman's Sweep (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon	
Requires battleaxe; close burst 1; the target can choose to fall prone as a free action to avoid this attack; +10 vs. AC; 5 damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Giant
Str 22 (+10)	Dex 16 (+7) Wis 10 (+4)
Con 19 (+8)	Int 11 (+4) Cha 8 (+3)
Equipment chainmail, light shield, battleaxe	

MERCYKILLER RECRUIT

The holdouts of the Mercykillers recruit as new members anyone with an eagerness to kill, even if not exactly driven to fight for law. Such recruits are often little more than violent thugs.

Sodkiller Foot Soldier	Level 10 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 500
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +8
HP 105; Bloodied 52	
AC 26; Fortitude 23, Reflex 18, Will 21	
Speed 5	
⚔ Glaive (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 4d4 + 5 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.	
⚔ Ignorance's Price (immediate reaction, when an enemy within reach makes an attack that doesn't include the Sodkiller foot soldier; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
The Sodkiller foot soldier makes a glaive attack against the triggering enemy.	
⚔ Sodkiller Justice (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon	
Requires glaive; close blast 2; +15 vs. AC; 4d4 + 5 damage, and if the target moves or shifts before the end of the Sodkiller foot soldier's next turn, the foot soldier can make a melee basic attack as a free action against that target.	
Murderous	
The Sodkiller foot soldier gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against bloodied targets.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common
Skills Intimidate +10	
Str 20 (+10)	Dex 11 (+5) Wis 16 (+8)
Con 17 (+8)	Int 10 (+5) Cha 11 (+5)
Equipment scale armor, glaive	

MERCYKILLER RECRUIT TACTICS

Mercykiller recruits are reckless agents of violence. They charge into battle and sweep their axes heedlessly through crowds of people, friend or foe.

SODKILLER FOOT SOLDIER

The Sodkillers' ranks are filled with vicious killers who feel no mercy or restraint.

Minder Assassin	Level 12 Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid, eladrin	XP 700
Initiative +14	Senses Perception +15; low-light vision
HP 114; Bloodied 57	
AC 26; Fortitude 22, Reflex 26, Will 25	
Saving Throws +5 against charm effects	
Speed 6; see also fey step	
⚔ Rapier (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+17 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage.	
⚔ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 5/10; +17 vs. AC; 2d4 + 6 damage.	
⚔ Dismissing Strike (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Teleportation, Weapon	
Requires rapier; +17 vs. AC; 3d8 + 6 damage, and the Minder assassin teleports the target 5 squares. The target cannot be teleported into an unsafe space.	
⚔ Sudden Justice (standard; encounter) ♦ Teleportation, Weapon	
The Minder assassin teleports 5 squares and makes an attack against an adjacent creature; requires rapier; +15 vs. AC; 4d8 + 6 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
Combat Advantage	
The Minder assassin deals 2d6 extra damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.	
Fey Step (move; encounter) ♦ Teleportation	
The Minder assassin teleports 5 squares.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +11, History +11, Stealth +17	
Str 15 (+8)	Dex 22 (+12) Wis 18 (+10)
Con 10 (+6)	Int 17 (+9) Cha 13 (+7)
Equipment leather armor, rapier, 6 daggers	

SODKILLER FOOT SOLDIER TACTICS

Foot soldiers strike quickly, driving their enemies before them at the points of their glaives. They gang up on anyone who fights back and beat down those who try to escape.

MINDER ASSASSIN

Minder assassins undertake missions against targets selected by their employer. They use some subterfuge, but only to get close enough for the killing strike. They are relentless once engaged in combat.

MINDER ASSASSIN TACTICS

A Minder assassin uses sudden justice (and fey step, if necessary) to teleport next to the mark and deliver a vicious attack. He or she might first use dismissing strike to isolate the mark or to remove any who try to interfere.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Mercykillers, regardless of their current status, are a militaristic organization and thus form up into squads and companies. Most work within their own groups, but they have been known to recruit mercenaries when their numbers are thin.

Level 7 Encounter (XP 1,500)

- ◆ 4 Sons of Mercy wardens (level 7 soldier)
- ◆ 4 human lackeys (level 7 minion; MM 162)

Level 10 Encounter (XP 2,550)

- ◆ 1 Minder assassin (level 12 skirmisher)
- ◆ 3 Sodkiller foot soldiers (level 10 soldier)
- ◆ 4 Mercykiller recruits (level 8 minion)

HEROES AND THE MERCYKILLERS

Given the wide range of views about law and justice upheld by the Mercykillers' splinter factions, there's room within this organization for player characters to join their cause. The following entries describe how

adventurers might fit within the groups and the sorts of missions they might undertake.

MERCYKILLERS

One of the easiest groups to join is the remnants of the Mercykillers, scattered in pockets across the planes, from the mortal world to floating islands in the Astral Sea. These small outposts have a broad range of motives, allowing you to tailor a group to fit your party's composition and objectives. As long as the PCs further the organization's agenda, their added strength and power is welcome. Generally, these remnants follow some or all of the original Mercykiller tenets (see the sidebar on page 16) or a variation on them. A specific group might seek vengeance against a rival branch of the same organization, another faction, or even a race. Typical missions include raiding enemy strongholds, tracking down known fugitives from justice, or recruiting new members to swell their ranks. Success in the field grants the PCs commensurate power, until they can take charge of the organization and bend its purpose to their own.

SODKILLERS

The Sodkillers usually work better as a villainous group, since their objectives tend to be darker, with murder, sabotage, and terrorist acts being common. Still, the organization's goal of absolute order might appeal to more pragmatic PCs, and such characters could find working with the Sodkillers an expedient way to attain some larger goal. Such arrangements are bound to be short-lived, though; the Sodkillers expect their members to carry out their missions with unflinching resolve, by any means necessary, never questioning orders. When cold-blooded murder is expected, only the most ruthless of adventurers can linger for long. Of course, breaking with the Sodkillers brings a whole new host of problems: The

organization takes vows seriously and visits lethal punishment on oathbreakers.

SONS OF MERCY

Of the three Mercykiller branches, the Sons of Mercy is the organization PCs are most likely to join. The group holds righteous justice to be the purest expression of order, an outlook palatable to most heroes. Characters who join the Sons of Mercy must share the group's singular vision and champion its cause in Sigil and beyond. Low-ranking members police the city's streets, bring in lawbreakers, and keep the peace. As the characters advance in both level and responsibility, they are entrusted with more important tasks, investigating high-profile cases such as murders and thefts, and tracking down nefarious cults. Each successful mission grows the characters' reputation until they can secure a place within the organization's command structure.

The Sons of Mercy wishes to expand its presence beyond Sigil in hopes of bringing about the ultimate purification of the cosmos. Cells might be found in cities of the mortal world, infiltrating local constables or acting as elite investigators. The adventurers might lead the way in this expansion, perhaps even founding their own branch far from Sigil.

PARAGON PATHS

SON OF MERCY

"Do the crime, and soon you'll be mine."

Prerequisite: Defender role

Champions of order, law, and justice, Sons of Mercy are common sights on Sigil's streets, but more and more, they range farther from the great city. They might take root in Astral dominions, raise citadels in the Feywild or Shadowfell, or found great bastions to combat lawlessness in the Elemental Chaos. They are symbols of order, champions of law who uphold justice wherever they travel. Sons of Mercy might be found among any group that splintered away from Sigil's Mercykillers during the Faction War, not just the faction that still bears that name.

You identify lawbreakers and fight to bring them to justice, whether that be swift execution or capture for questioning. You turn your attention to one target at a time and are single-minded in that pursuit, chasing down the fugitive until justice is served. Those who break the laws have good reason to fear you on the battlefield.

SON OF MERCY PATH FEATURES

Defenders can draw on many power sources, and so do the Sons of Mercy. These powers gain the keyword appropriate to the Son of Mercy's class. For example, a paladin Son of Mercy's powers have the divine keyword, while those of a warlord have the martial keyword.

Lawbreaker's Doom (11th level): You can use lawbreaker's doom as an encounter power.

Lawbreaker's Doom Son of Mercy Feature

You designate one enemy as the target of your attention. This evildoer will not escape justice.

Encounter ♦ Special

Free Action

Target: One enemy you just marked.

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, whenever you hit the target with an attack, you deal extra damage equal to your Wisdom modifier and the target is slowed until the end of your next turn.

Special: When the target is reduced to 0 hit points, you regain the use of this power.

Immobilizing Action (11th level): Whenever you spend an action point to make an extra attack against the target of your lawbreaker's doom power, on a hit with that attack the target is also immobilized until the start of your next turn.

Strength of Conviction (16th level): Whenever you reduce the target of your lawbreaker's doom power to 0 hit points, you gain temporary hit points equal to 10 + your Strength modifier.

SON OF MERCY POWERS

Dispensed Justice Son of Mercy Attack 11

There can be no justice without order, and your strike drives home this point.

Encounter ♦ Fear, Weapon; Special

Standard Action **Melee weapon**

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Special: You can instead use this power as an immediate interrupt with the following trigger.

Trigger: The target of your lawbreaker's doom power is adjacent to you and makes an attack that does not include you.

Target: The triggering creature.

Red Death

Son of Mercy Utility 12

You're all lawbreakers!

Encounter ♦ Special

Minor Action

Close burst 1

Target: Each enemy in burst

Effect: The target is marked and is subject to your lawbreaker's doom power until the end of your next turn.

Blood Oath Fulfilled Son of Mercy Attack 20

Crimes have been committed, and it's up to you to make sure these criminals pay the price.

Daily ♦ Fear, Weapon; Special

Standard Action

Close burst 1

Target: Each enemy in burst

Special: You can shift 1 square before the attack.

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target is knocked prone and cannot stand (save ends).

Miss: Half damage.

Lawbreaker's Doom: If the target is also the target of your lawbreaker's doom power, you gain a bonus to attack rolls against it equal to your Wisdom modifier. ☞

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb is an award-winning game designer whose recent credits include the FORGOTTEN REALMS® Player's Guide, Martial Power™, Draconomicon™, Chromatic Dragons, Manual of the Planes™, P2: Demon Queen's Enclave™, Player's Handbook® 2, Adventurer's Vault™ 2, and the EBERRON® Campaign Guide, as well as numerous articles on D&D Insider. Robert lives in Tennessee.



LORDS OF CHAOS

MUAL-TAR, THE THUNDER SERPENT

by James Wyatt

illustrations by Rob Alexander, Jim Nelson, and JP Targete

Imagine the most horrifying monstrosity your mind can conceive—a being of raw element, given chaotic and ever-changing form. Now make it worse—a being so mighty that even a god would not dare to face it alone. These were the primordials of the Dawn War.

Just as the gods appeared in the Astral Sea at the birth of the universe, so the primordials appeared in the Elemental Chaos when it was first formed. In that first age, they were glorious and terrible in their power, birthing the great titans with the merest shrug of effort and starting to shape a world from out of the chaos.

Their strength is much diminished, but that does not mean they are weak. Though in ancient times it took the combined effort of two or four deities to defeat a primordial in battle, even in their lesser state the primordials are a match for many deities. Thus, it is good that they are bound—good for the world, and good for the deities. For if they were unchained, the world itself might be torn from its foundations and cast back into the chaos from which it was made, and the gods would know the fury of their vengeance.

Somewhere within the nigh-infinite expanse of the Elemental Chaos drifts a desolate plain of rock, timeless and unchanging amid the ever-changing entropy surrounding it. Storm clouds roil and churn above it, and lightning sweeps across its surface in a never-ending dance. Five adamantine stakes crafted in Moradin's forge are sunk deep into that rock, lending it their divine stability. Bound in chains attached to those stakes, Mual-Tar the Thunder Serpent writhes in eternal fury, constantly seeking to escape its imprisonment and wreak its vengeance upon the gods who bound it there.

During the Dawn War, Mual-Tar fought to reclaim the skies and mountain peaks from the gods who had staked their claim to those parts of the world. Its furious storms lashed the mountain temples of Moradin and the sun-facing shrines of Pelor, and so those two gods were the first to challenge the Thunder Serpent. Enlisting the aid of their ally Bahamut, the gods fought Mual-Tar in a raging battle that crossed the skies. Finally they drove it back into the Elemental Chaos, where it grew still more fearsome and mighty, but with the chains that Moradin had forged for the battle, they trapped the Thunder Serpent and bound it for eternity.

Or so they believed.

Five hundred years ago, the first chain broke. Mighty storms swept across the Elemental Chaos in response, and awesome typhoons and hurricanes burst into the world as well. Since that day, cults devoted to the Thunder Serpent have grown in number and in strength across both the world and the Chaos, with the terrifying consequence that a second chain is on the verge of sundering. If Mual-Tar's power grows with each broken chain, even one more broken chain could mean catastrophe.

Mual-Tar		Level 35 Solo Brute
Gargantuan elemental beast (primordial)		XP 235,000
Initiative +28		Senses Perception +24; darkvision
Storm Aura (Thunder) aura 10; enemies within the aura lose resistance to lightning and thunder; each enemy that starts its turn within the aura takes 15 thunder damage, or 20 thunder damage if Mual-Tar is bloodied. The aura is difficult terrain for flying enemies.		
HP 1,605; Bloodied 802		
AC 49; Fortitude 50, Reflex 50, Will 47		
Immune attacks by characters below level 20; Resist 30 lightning, 30 thunder		
Saving Throws +5; whenever an attack applies an effect to Mual-Tar that a save can end, it makes an immediate saving throw. If it succeeds, Mual-Tar is unaffected by the effect. Mual-Tar makes saving throws at the end of each of its turns as normal.		
Speed fly 10 (hover)		
Action Points 2		
⚡ Thunder Bite (standard; at-will) ♦ Thunder		
Reach 4; +38 vs. AC; 3d12 + 11 thunder damage and target is dazed until the end of Mual-Tar's next turn.		
⚡ Vile Maw (standard; recharge when first bloodied) ♦ Thunder		
Reach 4; +38 vs. AC; 5d12 + 13 thunder damage.		
⚡ Rolling Thunder (standard, recharge ⏏ ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Thunder		
Mual-Tar makes two <i>thunder bite</i> attacks; see primordial frenzy.		
⚡ Lightning Tail (immediate interrupt, when an enemy within 4 squares makes an attack roll against Mual-Tar; at-will) ♦ Lightning		
Reach 4; +36 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 11 lightning damage and the target is weakened until the end of its turn.		
⚡ Storm Strike (standard; at-will) ♦ Lightning, Thunder		
Close burst 2; +34 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 11 thunder damage. After all attacks are resolved, Mual-Tar teleports 8 squares and makes a secondary attack. <i>Secondary Attack</i> : Close burst 2; affects 1 target in burst; +36 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 11 lightning damage.		
⚡ Wing Storm (minor; at-will) ♦ Lightning, Thunder		
Close burst 2; +34 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 11 lightning and thunder damage and slide the target 3 squares. <i>Miss</i> : Half damage and push the target 1 square.		
Primordial Frenzy		
When Mual-Tar is bloodied, <i>rolling thunder</i> recharges at the start of every round.		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Primordial	
Str 30 (+27)	Dex 32 (+28)	Wis 24 (+24)
Con 33 (+28)	Int 4 (+14)	Cha 30 (+27)

DESCRIPTION

Mual-Tar is an enormous serpentine form that appears to be made of storm cloud and lightning. Great wings of blue fire spread from its back, and thunder rolls from them as they move. Its head is unlike any mortal snake or dragon, with a two-pronged snout above a gaping maw that resembles a lamprey's mouth and is ringed with teeth of stone. Its snaky tail ends in long tendrils.

Lightning constantly crackles and leaps around the Thunder Serpent's writhing form. Storm clouds billow in the air around it, and the deep boom of thunder accompanies every beat of its wings.

The chains that bind Mual-Tar in the Elemental Chaos are massive links of adamantine infused with divine energy. A great collar of ghostly rings and spikes surrounds the Thunder Serpent's body, binding with magic what no metal could hold.

MUAL-TAR TACTICS

The Thunder Serpent is a destructive force of nature, not a cunning mastermind of evil, and its tactics reflect its bestial intellect.

Mual-Tar uses *vile maw* as its first melee attack in a battle. In a typical round before it is bloodied, Mual-Tar uses *thunder bite* (or *rolling thunder* if that power is available) and *wing storm* on its turn, moving only if necessary. It uses *lightning tail* at the first opportunity each round.

When it becomes bloodied, Mual-Tar uses *vile maw* again, then uses *rolling thunder* and *wing storm* most rounds. It uses *storm strike* to keep from being surrounded by foes.

MUAL-TAR LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

DC 20: Mual-Tar the Thunder Serpent is the name of a legendary primordial, one of the mighty beings who shaped the world from the Elemental Chaos and then fought the gods for control of the world. It is known as a physical embodiment of the force and fury of a raging storm.

DC 25: The Thunder Serpent is a barely sentient brute—little more than a beast chained somewhere within the wildest storms of the Elemental Chaos. Some say that one can see the storms surrounding Mual-Tar's prison from a hundred miles away.

DC 30: When the gods and primordials warred, Mual-Tar sought to wrest the skies and mountain peaks from the gods who laid claim to such areas, and thus made particular enemies of Moradin and Pelor. Those two gods, with the aid of Bahamut, defeated Mual-Tar, though they could not kill it. They bound it in chains of Moradin's making and believed this prison would last forever. During the long ages of its imprisonment, Mual-Tar's once-keen mind has degenerated into animalistic savagery and its power is greatly diminished from what it once was—but the Thunder Serpent remains one of the most fearsome beings in all existence.

DC 40: One of the five chains binding the Thunder Serpent is said to have broken five centuries ago, unleashing a wave of nightmarishly destructive storms across the world and the Elemental Chaos alike.

PRIMORDIAL CULTS

Primordial cults in general are dangerous forces that threaten to undermine the work of the gods and their followers. Some are more malign than others, even among cults devoted to the same primordial—one cult of the Fire Lord Imix might consist of murderers and arsonists while another engages in mostly abstract arcane study of the uses of elemental fire. At the core



of these cults' beliefs, though, is the notion—whether deluded, misguided, or sinister—that the primordials are more deserving of mortal service than the gods. Such a belief is not necessarily evil, just as not all primordials are evil—but it is a threat to the continued existence of the world in its current state.

In the years since the fall of the Empire of Nerath, just as no widespread kingdoms or nations control large expanses of territory, the priesthoods of the gods lack any unified hierarchy or central authority. They do, however, share common commandments, passed directly from the gods to their priests and down to their followers. People in different regions might depict Bahamut in different ways, offer him different kinds of sacrifices, recite different rites and litanies, and even call him by different names, but they know and strive to obey his commands: Uphold the ideals of honor and justice, remain vigilant against evil, protect the weak, and liberate the oppressed.

Primordial cults are an entirely different matter. They pay homage to entropic forces of raw chaos, most of which are bound, imprisoned, or in stasis as a result of their defeat at the gods' hands in the Dawn War. They lack any direct commands from their primordial patrons, and rarely, if ever, cooperate directly with other cults, even those that share the same patron. In the rare case that two cults dedicated to the same primordial exist in the same city, members of the two cults might refuse to speak to each other, or even actively fight against one another. They have widely divergent notions of their patron's will and how best to live their lives to carry out that will.

That said, in every primordial cult a will is at work. Sometimes it is the will of the primordial the cult ostensibly serves, but often it is the will of a charismatic founder or cult leader. Some of these individuals more or less innocently gather like-minded followers who share similar goals, while others deftly manipulate the thoughts and emotions of others and bend their followers to serve their own

purposes. They gather disaffected members of society, rebels and bandits and outcasts, and channel the rage and pain of these people toward their own ends.

Primordial cults in the world are primarily interested in acquiring power and harnessing the fury of their primordial patron for destructive ends. They learn ways to draw power from the primordial they serve, mastering obscure and dangerous rituals that let them bring elemental creatures into the world or acquiring powers that destroy their enemies with raw elemental force. They typically unleash this power in attacks upon temples, seats of government, or even entire cities, enacting in miniature the revolt against divine authority that they imagine their patron demands.

Cults in the Elemental Chaos are more focused on finding a way to liberate their primordial patron from whatever prison binds it, with the ultimate goal of unleashing the primordial to wreak havoc on the world. These cults consist of efreet, titans, archons, and other immensely powerful beings who share the original goal of the primordials—to wrest the world from the control of the gods and return it to the Chaos from which it came. Some of these mighty beings imagine remaking the world, where they repeat the first creative acts of the primordials, but without divine interference. Others seek only the destruction of the world, viewing its creation as a failed experiment not worth repeating.

Most civilized parts of the world frown on primordial cults or ban them outright, forcing these cults to operate in secret. Their members gather in abandoned warehouses, ancient ruins, cellars or sewers beneath the city streets, or secret rooms in crowded taverns. Their members develop covert ways to communicate and identify each other, or wear masks or hoods when they gather so they can't recognize each other. A common sort of coded communication involves using words in the Primordial language that sound the same as words in the speaker's native language (but have

different meanings). For example, a cultist might say (in Common) to someone he suspects might share his faith, "Your cloak is covered with *ghrain*." To the uninitiated, it might seem a strange choice of phrasing and perhaps an oddly accented pronunciation of "grime," but another cultist would hear and understand the Primordial word for "servant."

In the Elemental Chaos, of course, cults dedicated to the primordials are far more common and accepted than temples to the gods. The City of Brass, for example, holds a grand temple and several smaller shrines dedicated to the Fire Lord, Imix, but no temples to the gods. Followers of the primordials have no need to hide their devotion in such places, but they are no more organized or unified than their fellows in the world.

In the Elemental Chaos, of course, cults dedicated to the primordials are far more common and accepted than temples to the gods.

CULTS OF THE THUNDER SERPENT

Scattered cults devoted to the Thunder Serpent can be found in the world, in the Elemental Chaos, and even in the Feywild. Storm giants and storm titans are particularly inclined to worship Mual-Tar, but cults of humans, orcs, and even yuan-ti thrive in the world as well. A few eladrin and other fey creatures also give homage to the Thunder Serpent.

These various cults have little in common besides their reverence for Mual-Tar. Each has its own ideas of what the Thunder Serpent desires and commands, and each pursues its own goals, drawing on powers of thunder and lightning to help them toward achieving those goals.

THE HAMMER AND CHISEL SOCIETY

An abandoned building in a run-down part of the city bears the insignia of the stonecutter who once owned the place—a crossed hammer and chisel. On the nights of the waning crescent moon each month, members of an elite social club, as they see themselves, don masks and hooded cloaks and gather in the dusty great room of this old building to pay homage to the Thunder Serpent.

The motto of the Hammer and Chisel Society is simple: "Break the chains!" In the same way one might use a hammer and chisel to break a prisoner's chains, they say, one must break free of the chains that bind people to certain expectations of behavior

and social mores. Hidden behind their masks and hoods, the members of the society cast away the morals and customs that restrict their freedom.

A much smaller group within the larger society disappears from the great room at midnight, withdrawing to the building's cellar. There the initiates of the society offer their blood sacrifices to the Thunder Serpent, choosing from the uninitiated members of the Hammer and Chisel Society who pass out during the drunken revels above. They also engage in rites that infuse them with the power of the storm. To these initiates, the cult's motto, of course, has a different meaning—they believe that the prayers and sacrifices they offer to the Thunder Serpent will help to break the chains that bind it.

HAMMER AND CHISEL SOCIETY ENCOUNTER

The leader of the cult initiates is a human mage (*Monster Manual*, page 163), whose *dancing lightning* and *thunder burst* powers are a gift of Mual-Tar. The other cult initiates include a variety of other races and roles, while the revelers in the great room are best depicted as minions.

Level 3 Encounter (XP 825)

- ◆ 2 dwarf hammerers (level 5 soldier)
- ◆ 2 human bandits (level 2 skirmisher)
- ◆ 1 human mage (level 4 artillery)

STORMFURY ORCS

Most orcs worship the one-eyed god of destruction, Gruumsh. However, significant numbers of orcs revere other forces of destruction, including both primordial and demon princes. The Stormfury tribe is an example of a band of orcs dedicated to the Thunder Serpent, and they call on the power of the storm to lay waste to their enemies.

To the Stormfury orcs, the worship of Mual-Tar is a means to power. They believe that the Thunder Serpent wishes for them to do what they are naturally inclined to do anyway: raid, pillage, and destroy as the mighty storms do. They seek to fall upon the civilized world with all the fury of a hurricane, and they leave nothing standing in their wake.

Player characters might find themselves or whatever town or village they call home in the path of the Stormfury orcs. These orcs mass on the plains when a great thunderstorm brews, and run with the storm, attacking whatever settlements or homesteads lie in the storm's course. Characters could be called on to help defend the village from the orcs' attack, to find a way to divert the storm before the orcs reach the village, or to avenge the devastation the orcs leave in their wake.

Most orcs in the Stormfury tribe are typical orcs as described in the *Monster Manual*. Stormfury orc champions, however, are unique to this tribe, harnessing the power of Mual-Tar to deal thunder and lightning damage to their foes.

Stormfury Orc Champion	Level 7 Elite Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP 600
Initiative +5 Senses Perception +3; low-light vision	
HP 166; Bloodied 83	
AC 21; Fortitude 22, Reflex 20, Will 17	
Resist 5 lightning, 5 thunder	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6 (8 while charging)	
Action Points 1	
⚡ Greataxe (standard; at-will) ◆ Lightning, Weapon	
+10 vs. AC; 1d12 + 5 damage + 1d6 lightning damage (crit 1d12 + 17 + 1d6 lightning damage); see also <i>storm blood</i> .	
⚡ Storm's Retaliation (immediate reaction, when hit by an adjacent enemy; at-will)	
+9 vs. Fortitude; 1d12 + 5 damage plus 1d6 lightning damage and the target is pushed 1 square.	
⚡ Warrior's Surge (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ◆ Healing, Weapon	
The stormfury orc champion makes a melee basic attack and regains 42 hit points.	
Storm Blood ◆ Healing, Thunder, Weapon	
When it hits a bloodied enemy, the stormfury orc champion deals 5 extra thunder damage and regains 10 hit points.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Common, Giant, Primordial
Skills Arcana +7, Endurance +11, Intimidate +8	
Str 20 (+8)	Dex 15 (+5) Wis 11 (+3)
Con 17 (+6)	Int 9 (+2) Cha 10 (+3)

STORMFURY ORC CHAMPION TACTICS

A Stormfury orc champion is similar to the orc bloodrager described in the *Monster Manual*, and follows similar tactics: It charges into battle, spends its action point immediately to follow up on its charge, and uses *warrior's surge* as soon as it becomes bloodied. It concentrates on bloodied targets if at all possible, using its *storm blood* power to deal extra damage and heal itself. It uses *storm's retaliation* the first time it is hit

by an adjacent enemy each round, unless a bloodied enemy is adjacent—in which case it saves its immediate action for the bloodied enemy's attack.

STORMFURY ORC LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful Nature or Religion check.

DC 20: Although most orcs worship Gruumsh, some revere other forces of destruction, including demon lords and primordials. The Stormfury orc tribe is devoted to the primordial called Mual-Tar the Thunder Serpent. They scar their faces and arms with lightning designs.

DC 25: Stormfury orcs gather their scattered clans together in stormy seasons, massing beneath towering thunderheads and assaulting whatever settlements lie in the storm's path, adding their rage to the fury of the storm.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Stormfury orcs dominate or form alliances with other creatures that make use of thunder and lightning, including stormclaw scorpions, shambling mounds, and vine horror spellfiends.

Level 2 Encounter (XP 675)

- ◆ 1 orc berserker (level 4 brute)
- ◆ 2 orc raiders (level 3 skirmisher)
- ◆ 2 stormclaw scorpions (level 1 soldier)

Level 6 Encounter (XP 1,450)

- ◆ 3 orc raiders (level 3 skirmisher)
- ◆ 1 shambling mound (level 9 brute)
- ◆ 1 Stormfury orc champion (level 7 elite brute)

Level 7 Encounter (XP 1,500)

- ◆ 2 Stormfury orc champions (level 7 elite brute)
- ◆ 1 vine horror spellfiend (level 7 artillery)

THE FOREST TEMPLE OF SARPACALA

Deep in a forest in a remote part of the world's wilderness stands an ancient ruin that was built during the time of the serpent empire of Zannad. The progenitor race of serpentfolk that later devolved into the yuan-ti constructed this pyramidlike structure in homage to Zehir, but the iconography of the temple is unusual in that it features lightning motifs and thunderclouds. The yuan-ti that still crawl through the ruins of the temple no longer worship Zehir—they give their homage to Mual-Tar, the Serpent of Thunder.

The yuan-ti of Sarpacala are actively seeking a way to free the Thunder Serpent from the chains that bind it in the Elemental Chaos. For uncounted centuries they have chanted dark rituals in the hidden sanctuaries of the temple, slowly unraveling the divine power that infuses the chains holding their primordial overlord



fast. Five centuries ago, they believe, their ancestors' efforts were rewarded since the first chain holding Mual-Tar broke. They second chain, they are convinced, should break very soon. And once that one is sundered, they hope to see the rest break in rapid succession.

Like the Stormfury orcs, the majority of the yuan-ti of Sarpacala are typical yuan-ti as described in the *Monster Manual*. Their leaders wield thundering power derived from their service to Mual-Tar, however, rather than the poison and deceit of Zehir.

Sarpacala Malison		Level 17 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (reptile), yuan-ti		XP 1,600
Initiative +13	Senses Perception +12	
Thunder Ward (Healing, Thunder) aura 3; each ally that starts its turn within the aura regains 5 hit points, and each enemy that starts its turn within the aura takes 5 thunder damage.		
HP 164; Bloodied 82		
AC 31; Fortitude 29, Reflex 29, Will 32		
Resist 5 lightning, 10 poison, 5 thunder		
Speed 7		
⚔ Longspear (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison, Weapon		
Reach 2; +22 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).		
⚡ Lightning Spear (standard; recharge ☐ ☐ ☐) ♦ Lightning, Weapon		
Reach 2; +21 vs. Fortitude; 3d10 + 7 lightning damage and the Sarpacala malison pushes the target 2 squares and knocks it prone.		
⚡ Crushing Thunderclap (standard; at-will) ♦ Thunder		
Area burst 1 within 10; +19 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 7 thunder damage and the target is slowed (save ends).		
⚡ Thunder Serpent's Wings (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ Lightning, Thunder		
Close burst 2; targets enemies in burst; +19 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 7 lightning and thunder damage, and slide the target 3 squares. Miss: Half damage, and push the target 1 square. Effect: Allies in the burst can shift 3 squares as a free action.		
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Common, Draconic, Primordial
Skills Arcana +18, Bluff +21, History +18, Insight +17, Stealth +18		
Str 16 (+11)	Dex 20 (+13)	Wis 18 (+12)
Con 20 (+13)	Int 20 (+13)	Cha 26 (+16)
Equipment longspear		

SARPACALA MALISON TACTICS

A Sarpacala malison typically initiates combat with a *crushing thunderclap* attack before wading into melee alongside its soldier allies and minions. It uses *thunder serpent's wings* if at least three enemies and two allies are within 2 squares of it, and repeats *crushing thunderclap* if it ever has no enemies within easy reach. It uses its *lightning spear* power as often as possible, relying on its normal longspear attack only if no other options are available.

SARPACALA LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful History or Religion check.

DC 25: Sarpacala is a ruined temple from the ancient empire of Zannad, built by the ancestors of the yuan-ti. Its art is unusual in that it prominently features images of storm clouds and lightning bolts—probably due to the temple's location in a region prone to violent storms.

DC 30: The yuan-ti that now inhabit Sarpacala worship a primordial called Mual-Tar, the Thunder Serpent. Their leaders are malisons that wield the power of thunder and lightning to drive away those who would plunder the temple's ancient riches or interfere with the plots and schemes of the yuan-ti.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Most of the inhabitants of Sarpacala are yuan-ti, and they are encountered together in various combinations. The yuan-ti have a number of stormrage shambling mounds under their control, and at the heart of the temple, some cyclops emissaries from the Feywild (see Eldresh, Bralani of Autumn Storms, below) assist the yuan-ti in their rituals.

Level 13 Encounter (XP 4,400)

- ♦ 1 stormrage shambler (level 11 elite controller)
- ♦ 2 yuan-ti abominations (level 14 soldier)
- ♦ 1 yuan-ti malison incanter (level 15 artillery)

Level 15 Encounter (XP 6,000)

- ◆ 2 Sarpacala malisons (level 17 controller)
- ◆ 2 yuan-ti abominations (level 14 soldier)
- ◆ 1 yuan-ti malison sharp-eye (level 13 artillery)

Level 17 Encounter (XP 8,800)

- ◆ 2 cyclops storm shamans (level 17 artillery)
- ◆ 1 Sarpacala malison (level 17 controller)
- ◆ 4 yuan-ti abominations (level 14 soldier)

ELDRESH, BRALANI OF AUTUMN STORMS

Many noble eladrin are strongly associated with seasonal and weather phenomena, and Eldresh is no exception. Similar to the bralani of autumn winds described in the *Monster Manual*, Eldresh wields the power of autumn storms, adding thunder and lightning to the winds of her savage attacks. However, where most eladrin draw their power from their inherent connection to the natural world and its fey echo, Eldresh went straight to the source—to Mual-Tar, the Father of Storms.

Although she enjoys the power she wields in Mual-Tar's name, Eldresh is more interested in the power that other followers of the Thunder Serpent could bring to aid her in her scheming. She seeks to overthrow the ruling council of Mithrendain (see *Dragon*® #366), and she believes that the allies she has found through her connection to Mual-Tar are her best chance to achieve that goal.

Eldresh is a tall, regal eladrin with stark white hair constantly blown by the winds she wears as her cloak. Her eyes flash with lightning when she is angry, and her stern voice is echoed by the rumble of thunder in the sky. She dresses in flowing robes of midnight blue that flap and rustle in the wind, and the fabric is embroidered with yellow lightning designs on the hems and cuffs.

Eldresh's statistics are almost identical to the bralani of autumn winds in the *Monster Manual*. Her powers have different names and deal different damage types, but are otherwise identical to the standard creature's.

Eldresh, Bralani of Autumn Storms		Level 19 Controller
(Variant Bralani of Autumn Winds)		
Medium fey humanoid, eladrin		XP 2,400
Initiative +17		Senses Perception +13; low-light vision
Windstorm Cloak aura 5; creatures other than eladrin (including flying creatures) treat the area within the aura as difficult terrain.		
HP 180; Bloodied 90		
AC 33; Fortitude 28, Reflex 31, Will 32		
Resist 20 radiant; Vulnerable necrotic (slowed until the end of the bralani's next turn)		
Saving Throws +5 against charm effects		
Speed 6, fly 9 (hover); see also fey step		
⚔ Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+23 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage.		
⚡ Lightning Strike (standard; encounter) ♦ Lightning		
Ranged 5; +22 vs. Reflex; the target is weakened until the end of the encounter.		
⚡ Thundering Blast (standard; at-will) ♦ Thunder		
Close blast 5; +22 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 9 thunder damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares (pushed 3 squares and knocked prone on a critical hit). Miss: Half damage, and the target is not pushed.		
Fey Step (move; encounter) ♦ Teleportation		
The bralani of autumn storms can teleport 5 squares.		
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +14, History +14, Intimidate +22, Nature +18		
Str 15 (+11)	Dex 26 (+17)	Wis 19 (+13)
Con 20 (+14)	Int 16 (+12)	Cha 27 (+17)
Equipment leather armor, longsword		

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Eldresh has found allies in strange places in the Feywild and in the world. Both storm giants and cyclopes aid her cause, and she has several other fey allies as well.

Level 17 Encounter (XP 8,000)

- ◆ Eldresh, bralani of autumn storms (level 19 controller)
- ◆ 2 cyclops storm shamans (level 17 artillery)
- ◆ 2 thunderfury boars (level 15 brute)

Level 19 Encounter (XP 13,600)

- ◆ Eldresh, bralani of autumn storms (level 19 controller)
- ◆ 1 blackroot treant (level 19 elite soldier)
- ◆ 2 wild hunt hounds (level 21 skirmisher)

Level 21 Encounter (XP 16,750)

- ◆ Eldresh, bralani of autumn storms (level 19 controller)
- ◆ 1 storm giant (level 24 controller)
- ◆ 1 thunderhawk (level 22 elite soldier)

THE THUNDER TEMPLE

Drifting on an island of rock in the Elemental Chaos stands Mual-Tar's greatest temple, called the Thunder Temple. This palatial shrine is the center of the Thunder Serpent's most important and powerful cult, which includes efreet, storm titans, archons, and even a dragon among its number. Storm clouds and rivers of lightning stream around the temple, filling the air with the deafening sounds of endless thunder.

The three leaders of the Thunder Temple are a blue dragon called Tarsharan, an efreet named Murandrae, and a dragonspawn called Shar Malam. Each of the three has different reasons for serving the Thunder Serpent and tries to steer the cult in different directions, creating significant strife within the temple.

Tarsharan is an ancient blue dragon (*Monster Manual*, page 79) who traveled to the Elemental Chaos five hundred years ago, in response to the wave of storms unleashed on the world when the first chain was broken. At the time, he sought only to



What he desires is leadership over the other powerful creatures that inhabit the Thunder Temple, so that he can use them for his own dreams of conquest in the world.

learn the source of those storms, but when he discovered that such terrible power came about through such an apparently minor event, he immediately became a devotee of the Thunder Serpent. His motivation is simple: He wants power in the form of utter devastation, so he seeks to break Mual-Tar's remaining chains to loose that devastation upon the world.

Murandrae is an efreet karadjin (*Monster Manual*, page 100) who was exiled from her house centu-

ries ago because of her devotion to Mual-Tar and her refusal to acknowledge the Fire Lord Imix. She serves the Thunder Serpent because of her utter conviction that its release from Moradin's chains is imminent, and she plans to play a key part in achieving that release. With the power of an unchained primordial at her back, she dreams of conquering the City of Brass. Murandrae has communicated with both the yuan-ti of Sarpacala and the leaders of

the Hammer and Chisel Society, instructing them on rituals they can perform to aid the imprisoned primordial and claim its power for themselves.

Shar Malam is a bluespawn godslayer (*Monster Manual*, page 89) who does not seek the Thunder Serpent's freedom. He cares nothing for Mual-Tar, but he plays on the devotion of the primordials' other cultists as he feigns piety and loyal service. What he desires is leadership over the other powerful creatures that inhabit the Thunder Temple, so that he can use them for his own dreams of conquest in the world. He hopes some day to obliterate the temples of both Bahamut and Tiamat throughout the world, then establish himself as the god of all dragonkind. Shar Malam views the Stormfury orcs as something

of a pet project, and he uses his own rituals to create and control storms in the world that lead the orcs to attack targets of his choosing.

PRIMORDIAL THUNDERSPAWN

Stormy offspring of Mual-Tar, primordial thunderspawn are elemental creatures that embody the destructive forces of the storm that rage inside their progenitor. They are frequently found in and around the Thunder Temple, as well as floating above the plain where Mual-Tar is imprisoned.

Primordial Thunderspawn	Level 25 Elite Brute
Huge elemental beast (lightning, thunder)	XP 14,000
Initiative +21	Senses Perception +17; darkvision
HP 570; Bloodied 285	
AC 39; Fortitude 38, Reflex 39, Will 37	
Resist 20 lightning, 20 thunder	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed fly 8 (hover)	
Action Points 1	
⚡ Storm Lash (standard; at-will) ⚡ Lightning	
Reach 3; +26 vs. Fortitude; 4d8 + 9 lightning damage.	
⚡ Double Lash (standard; at-will) ⚡ Lightning	
The primordial thunderspawn makes two <i>storm lash</i> attacks.	
⚡ Sundering Storm (standard; recharge ⏳) ⚡ Lightning, Thunder	
Close burst 2; +24 vs. AC; 4d8 + 9 lightning and thunder damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses (save ends).	
⚡ Thunder Blast (standard; at-will) ⚡ Thunder	
Close blast 3; +24 vs. Fortitude; 3d6 + 9 thunder damage and the target is knocked prone.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Primordial
Str 23 (+18)	Dex 28 (+21)
Con 25 (+19)	Int 2 (+8)
	Wis 20 (+17)
	Cha 24 (+19)

A primordial thunderspawn resembles a snakelike form of solid storm cloud, wreathed in lightning. It lacks the fiery wings or distinctive features of the Thunder Serpent, bearing only a gaping maw like a great cyclone that draws air and prey into its body.

PRIMORDIAL THUNDERSPAWN TACTICS

A primordial thunderspawn lacks even the minimal intelligence of Mual-Tar, hunting the Elemental Chaos without any goals or desires other than to feed and to destroy. It begins combat with a *sundering storm* attack, and then uses either *double lash* or *thunder blast* each round on its turn, depending on the number of targets it can reach.

PRIMORDIAL THUNDERSPAWN LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

DC 25: Primordial thunderspawn are elemental creatures of thunder, lightning, and cloud. They are said to be offshoots or spawn of Mual-Tar, the Thunder Serpent. Though basically bestial in nature and intelligence, they can be tamed and are found connected with cults of the Thunder Serpent, particularly cults that operate in the Elemental Chaos.

THUNDER TEMPLE ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Besides its three leaders, the Thunder Temple is inhabited and visited by storm titans, archons (currently including ice and air archons, though fire archons have been seen there as well), a few other efreet, and various elemental beasts.

Level 22 Encounter (XP 20,800)

- ◆ 2 air archon tempestblades (level 18 skirmisher) (*Manual of the Planes*)
- ◆ 1 ice archon frostshaper (level 20 controller)
- ◆ 1 primordial thunderspawn (level 25 elite brute)

Level 24 Encounter (XP 33,300)

- ◆ 1 efreet pyresinger (level 25 controller)
- ◆ Shar Malam, bluespawn godslayer (level 22 elite brute)

- ◆ 1 thunderblast cyclone elemental (level 26 elite artillery)

Level 25 Encounter (XP 42,700)

- ◆ 1 primordial thunderspawn (level 25 elite brute)
- ◆ 2 storm giants (level 24 controller)
- ◆ 2 thunderhawks (level 22 elite soldier)

Level 26 Encounter (XP 50,000)

- ◆ 2 primordial thunderspawn (level 25 elite brute)
- ◆ 1 storm titan (level 27 elite controller)

Level 27 Encounter (XP 62,000)

- ◆ Murandrae, efreet karadjin (level 28 soldier)
- ◆ 3 storm gorgons (level 26 skirmisher)
- ◆ 1 storm titan (level 27 elite controller)

Level 28 Encounter (XP 65,000)

- ◆ Tarsharan, ancient blue dragon (level 28 solo artillery)

USING MUAL-TAR IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

As previously mentioned, Mual-Tar is not an evil mastermind plotting the downfall of the universe. However, several evil masterminds serve the Thunder Serpent—or seek to use its power to further their nefarious ends. The dragon Tarsharan, Murandrae the efreet, Eldresh, the yuan-ti of Sarpacala, and the leaders of the Hammer and Chisel Society fit that description and occupy every tier of an adventuring party's career, creating the potential for a campaign arc that features these threats in a prominent role.

HEROIC TIER: A TIME OF STORMS

Early in the characters' adventuring career, a terrible storm sweeps across the region, bringing the marauding Stormfury orcs with it. The characters might combat Stormfury orcs on several occasions over the course of the heroic tier, perhaps steering the marauding orcs away from their home town only to face a new band of orcs when another storm arises.

In between orc raids, the characters might be drawn into an investigation of the Hammer and Chisel Society when an acquaintance of theirs disappears. As they slowly unravel the web of secrets he wove around himself, they learn first of his membership in this society and then that he was the cult's latest sacrificial victim. A clue found with the leadership of the society indicates that they had a powerful patron—a mysterious figure who taught them their rituals. They might even catch a glimpse of Murandrae when they face the cult's leaders.

Similarly, when the characters finally put the threat of the Stormfury orcs to rest, they discover that the leaders of the orc tribe revered a draconic humanoid figure as something of a prophet of their "god," the Thunder Serpent.

PARAGON TIER: THE SERPENT'S NEST

At the start of the characters' paragon career, the worst storm in recorded history devastates the region. Investigating the storm, the characters learn of a similar storm 500 years ago, which was ascribed to the sundering of one of the chains that bound the Thunder Serpent. In search of more information about this primordial, the characters find their way to the ancient temple of Sarpacala and spend some time fighting the yuan-ti there. In the course of this adventuring, they find evidence to support the theory that

a second of the chains binding Mual-Tar has indeed broken, and they again find evidence of Murandrae's involvement with these yuan-ti.

The cyclopes in Sarpacala lead the characters to explore the connection between the yuan-ti and the eladrin bralani they serve, Eldresh. The characters venture into the Feywild to confront Eldresh and save the city of Mithrendain from the storms she unleashes upon it.

EPIC TIER: THE THUNDER TEMPLE

A third chain breaks, unleashing a storm so violent that it tears parts of the world—including the player characters—into the Elemental Chaos. Seeking the source of the storm, the characters find their way to the Thunder Temple.

The threats within the Thunder Temple span the entire epic tier, so the characters can't treat it as merely an enormous dungeon to be cleared. Early in the epic tier, they can confront associated creatures away from the temple grounds. As they gain levels, they could face Shar Malam—perhaps by their own choosing, or perhaps because one of the other temple leaders uses them to strike against this rival. The plots and schemes of Murandrae and Tarsharan are far-reaching, and these super-powerful geniuses have resources at their command to manipulate the characters.

While the characters are dealing with the threats within the Thunder Temple, however, they also need to research a means by which they can reforge the three broken chains before the other two break and release Mual-Tar upon an unsuspecting world. They probably need to visit Moradin's forge in the Astral dominion of Celestia (*Manual of the Planes*, page 91). Before they can bind the Thunder Serpent anew, however, they have to defeat or at least bloody it in a climactic encounter to bring the campaign to an end. 🐉

About the Author

The Design Manager for the D&D® game and one of the lead designers for 4th Edition, **James Wyatt** has something of a thunderstorm fetish. Between this article, "The Storm Lord's Keep" (*Dungeon*® #93), and his *EBERRON*® novel trilogy (which began with *Storm Dragon* and features a character with the Mark of Storm), he's written more about thunderstorms than is probably sane. Must be all the Seattle rain.



by Chris Tulach

illustrations by James Zhang

cartography by Robert Lazzaretti

Ancient Magic and Present Threats

ADVENTURERS OF THE REALMS

The FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting is a vast place, and heroes can emerge from anywhere, rising from their commonplace lives to thwart danger and show remarkable courage. In the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Player's Guide*, a large selection of backgrounds is available for player characters, and each one is tied to a region. These backgrounds give a player inspiration for determining their character's place in the world, as well as provide a regional benefit.

This article is the first in a series to expand character options by providing new feats and paragon paths for the different regional backgrounds. We begin by highlighting three regions that share a past rooted in strong magical traditions, and

which presently are imperiled by threats from within and without their lands. More information on Aglarond, Impiltur, and the Moonshae Isles can be found in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Guide* and the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Player's Guide*. Although the material in this article was written specifically for use in a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign, you can easily adapt it to your own campaign, no matter where you set it.

The feats presented here can help flesh out your background by providing possible occupations prior to your adventuring life. The paragon paths in this article have a dual class requirement; you can satisfy both class requirements by possessing one class and selecting a multiclass feat for the other.

AGLAROND

The Simbul disappeared long ago, and the undead threat of Thay looms large for the struggling nation of Aglarond. The Sea of Fallen Stars remains an important part of Aglarond's commerce, with the city of Delthuntle serving as a major port to the genasi nation of Akanûl. Elsewhere, the Yuirwood and its fey mysteries dominate the interior of Aglarond, and those that live within its reaches often come into contact with creatures of the Feywild.

HEROIC TIER FEATS

The following feats are available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

DELTHUNTLE SAILOR

Prerequisite: Aglarond regional benefit

Benefit: You gain Primordial as a bonus language.

You also gain a +2 bonus to Acrobatics and Athletics checks made while aboard a ship. With a successful Athletics check, you can climb at your normal speed (rather than half speed) while aboard a ship.



YUIRWOOD FEYFRIEND

Prerequisite: Aglarond regional benefit

Benefit: You also gain a +2 feat bonus to Arcana checks and saving throws against charm effects.

THAY INFILTRATOR

"I have traveled beyond to the land of nightmares and have faced horrors that only vigilance can save us from."

Prerequisites: Ranger and healing word class feature, Aglarond regional benefit

You are one of a few brave souls that strike out into Thay, using your stealth and holy might to protect yourself as you pursue your mission. Sometimes you're asked to reconnoiter for the army, other times you're sent in to recover a lost object or rescue an abducted citizen before he or she succumbs to a dark fate.

You serve as an expert guide to any team you accompany into the undead realm of Thay, and your natural leadership helps you navigate your group to your objective as quickly and efficiently as possible.

THAY INFILTRATOR PATH FEATURES

Sacred Stealth (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, after that action is resolved you can move your speed and make a Stealth check to hide from your target (provided you have superior cover or total concealment from that target when you end your movement).

Blinded by the Light (11th level): Whenever you hit your quarry with an attack that deals radiant damage, you gain total concealment from the target until the end of your next turn.

Rise and Fire (16th level): Whenever you use your *healing word* to heal a dying ally, you can make a ranged basic attack as a free action.

THAY INFILTRATOR PRAYERS

Blessed Shot

Thay Infiltrator Attack 11

You utter a quick prayer to your deity, and charge your projectile with holy energy.

Encounter ♦ Divine, Radiant, Weapon

Standard Action

Ranged weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Dexterity or Wisdom vs. AC

Hit: 3[W] + Wisdom modifier + Dexterity modifier radiant damage.

Divine Veil

Thay Infiltrator Utility 12

While you incant the name of your deity, a burst of glittering light masks you and your allies from view.

Daily ♦ Divine, Healing

Standard Action

Close burst 5

Target: You and each ally in burst

Effect: Each target can spend a healing surge. In addition, each ally can select one target; that ally gains total concealment from that enemy until the end of your next turn, and the ally can make an immediate Stealth check as a free action to hide from that target.

Holy Barrage

Thay Infiltrator Attack 20

You launch a hail of projectiles at multiple foes, all charged with divine energy.

Daily ♦ Divine, Healing, Radiant, Weapon

Standard Action

Area burst 2 within weapon's range

Targets: Each enemy in burst you can see

Attack: Dexterity or Wisdom vs. AC

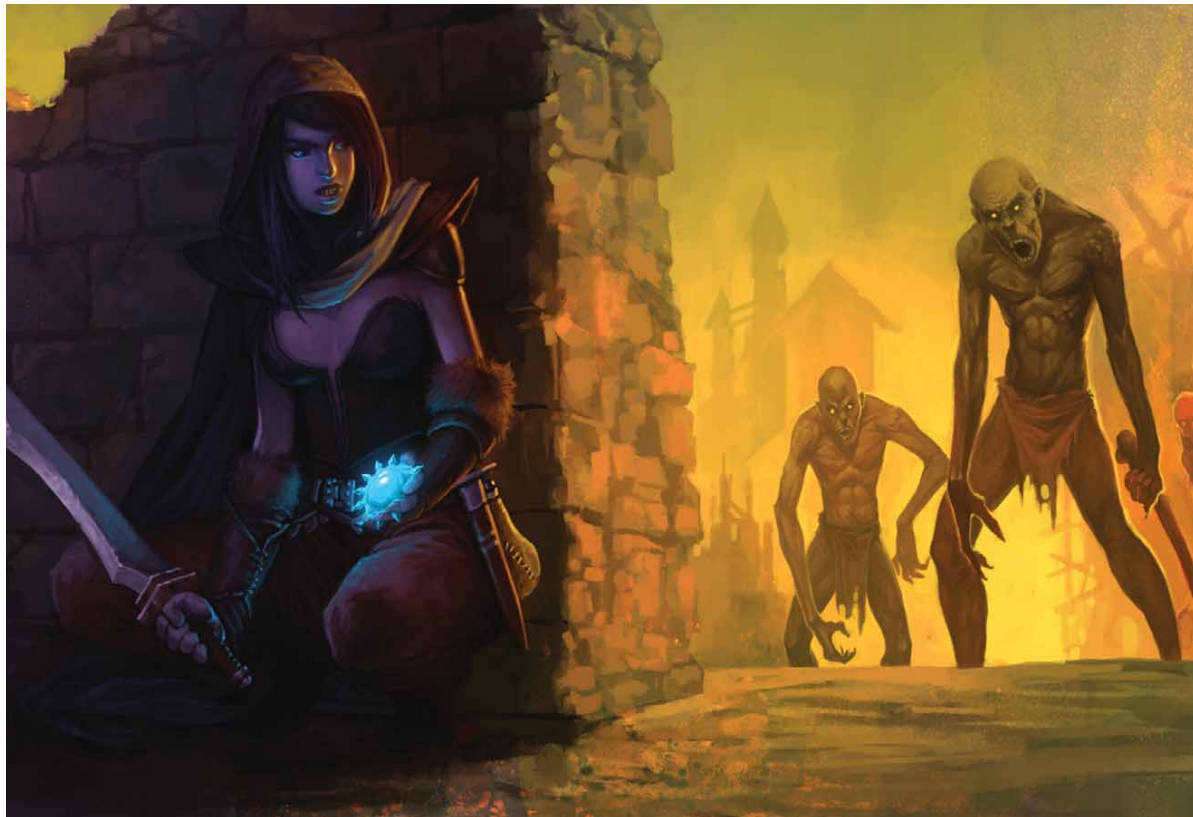
Hit: 3[W] + Wisdom modifier radiant damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: One ally within 5 squares of you can spend a healing surge, gain a +2 bonus to all defenses until the end of your next turn, or gain regeneration 5 until the end of the encounter (ally's choice).

IMPILTUR

Once far greater in power and wealth, Impiltur is a nation beset by corruption and demon-worshipping cults. Now, the common folk cling to threads of desperate hope that good-hearted, strong-armed souls will banish the evil from their decaying land. New Sarshel remains one of Impiltur's only strong settlements, but lawlessness still often needs to be quelled by hired muscle. The mining communities of the Earthspur Mountains also provide some degree of wealth to the nation, but those that venture here to make a living deep in the earth find it a dangerous, monster-ridden affair.



HEROIC TIER FEATS

The following feats are available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

EARTHSPUR DEEPMINER

Prerequisite: Impiltur regional benefit

Benefit: You gain Deep Speech as a bonus language and resist 2 necrotic.

At 11th level, your resistance increases to resist 3 necrotic, and at 21st level your resistance increases to resist 5 necrotic.

NEW SARSHEL ENFORCER

Prerequisite: Impiltur regional benefit

Benefit: When you roll an Intimidate check, roll twice and use either result.

You also gain a +2 feat bonus to initiative checks.

THAROS IMPOSTOR

"I might number vile fiends and corrupt politicians among my associates, but I assure you, I bear them no good will."

Prerequisites: Rogue and infernal pact warlock, Impiltur regional benefit

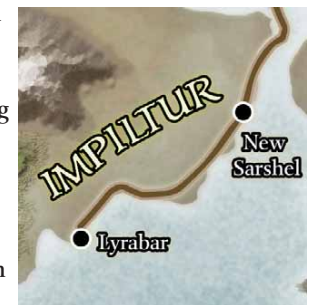
You have infiltrated a demon cult known as the Fraternity of Tharos in hopes of eventually destroying it and restoring a measure of hope to the beleaguered land of Impiltur. You've had to perform a vile rite involving innocent sacrifice to enter the cult, and the stain of that deed only fuels your hatred of their existence. You have sworn one day to avenge all those who have suffered by the hands of the cult, and by doing so, you hope it will exonerate your own dark past.

Using a combination of guile and infernal knowledge, you provide inside information for any adventuring group you join, chipping slowly away at the Fraternity and stopping their vile plots while keeping your cover intact.

THAROS IMPOSTOR PATH FEATURES

Terrifying Wrath (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, all enemies within 5 squares of you take a -2 penalty to saving throws until the end of your next turn.

Accomplished Liar (11th level): When you roll a Bluff check, you can roll twice and use either



result. In addition, you can use Bluff to gain combat advantage by feinting (see page 183 of the *Player's Handbook*) as a minor action.

Hellbound Fury (16th level): When you hit an enemy with *hellish rebuke*, you gain combat advantage against that enemy until the end of your next turn.

THAROS IMPOSTOR SPELLS

Hellfire Blade Tharos Impostor Attack 11

Your blade blazes with an infernal fire, turning all it touches into black ash.

Encounter ♦ Arcane, Fire, Weapon

Standard Action **Melee or Ranged weapon**

Requirement: You must be wielding a light blade.

Target: One creature

Attack: Dexterity or Constitution vs. Reflex

Hit: 3[W] + Constitution modifier fire damage, and the target is slowed until the end of your next turn. This damage ignores all resistances.

Ashen Compact Tharos Impostor Utility 12

You utter a demand to infernal agents, and they respond with a boon, draining some of your life essence in payment.

Daily ♦ Arcane, Teleportation

Move Action **Personal**

Effect: Lose 1 healing surge. You teleport 10 squares and gain resist fire equal to your healing surge value until the end of the encounter.

Demon-Fueled Vengeance Tharos Impostor Attack 20

Your blade smolders with a dull red glow, dripping ash as you strike at your target.

Daily ♦ Arcane, Fire, Weapon

Standard Action **Melee or Ranged weapon**

Requirement: You must be wielding a light blade.

Target: One creature

Attack: Dexterity or Constitution vs. Reflex

Hit: 5[W] + Constitution modifier fire damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: All the target's resistances are reduced to 0 (save ends).

MOONSHAE ISLES

A scattered array of islands off the Sword Coast, the Moonshae Isles are a hard land fending off many threats, some from expansionist nations, and others from the planes beyond. Home of two human cultures—the rustic Ffolk and the seafaring Northlanders—several islands have either been conquered or are overrun. While Alaron and Norland remain in human-controlled hands, Moray has been almost completely lost to lycanthropes. The few humans that live in small villages there struggle to mete out a living amid the constant predations of Malar-worshipping werecreatures.

A more mundane and organized threat, Amn has taken control of much of the island of Snowdown. The Ffolk that live on the island have been waging a quiet resistance there to disrupt their consumption of resources that occasionally flares up when the Amnite loyalists discover a previously hidden cell.

Likely from beyond Faerûn, the island of Oman was overrun. Giants completely control it now, in particular fomorians, and they probably came from the oft-breached barrier between the Moonshaes and the Feywild. The Northlanders in particular would like to reclaim the island and Iron Keep, and many young adventurers learn the craft of giantkilling on Norland to one day see that dream realized.

HEROIC TIER FEATS

The following feats are available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

MORAY MILITIA

Prerequisite: Moonshae Isles regional benefit

Benefit: When you roll an Endurance check to check disease progression, roll twice and use the higher result.

You treat any weapon you wield as though it were a silvered weapon (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 220).

SNOWDOWN COURIER

Prerequisites: Moonshae Isles regional benefit

Benefit: When you take the run action, gain a +2 feat bonus to AC and Reflex against opportunity attacks.

You also gain a +2 feat bonus to Streetwise checks.

OMAN GIANTKILLER

"They bleed right? Then we can kill 'em. That's all you need to know."

Prerequisites: Fighter and hunter's quarry class feature, Moonshae Isles regional benefit

You were trained by a clan of Northlanders who have developed specialized tactics for giantkilling. Although their purpose in training you was to aid them in



liberating the isle of Oman, you've found that their techniques are very applicable to other enemies as well. In addition to learning how to effectively fight giants, the Northlanders taught you a bit about sailing and the sea.

In a group, you stay out front, confounding your brutish enemies until you are ready to strike a killing blow. You are willing to take calculated risks to obtain advantage over your larger foes, and with enough support, you keep your enemies' attention focused on you. It's a challenge to go toe-to-toe with heavy hitters all the time, but it's one you relish.

OMAN GIANTKILLER PATH FEATURES

In the Thick of the Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you deal 4 extra damage against Large or larger enemies and gain +2 speed until the start of your next turn.

Northlander Persistence (11th level): When you take the second wind action, you can spend one additional healing surge.

One More Time (16th level): Whenever you designate a target that is not currently your quarry as your quarry, that target is marked by you until the end of your next turn.

OMAN GIANTKILLER EXPLOITS

Toss and Close Oman Giantkiller Attack 11

You throw your weapon at the target, rapidly close the ground between you and it, and get in a quick melee attack.

Encounter ♦ Martial, Weapon

Standard Action Ranged weapon

Requirement: You must be wielding a light thrown or heavy thrown weapon.

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage

Effect: After the attack is resolved, move your speed toward the target of your ranged attack; you can draw one melee weapon during this movement. If you are within melee range at the end of this movement, make a melee basic attack against the target.

Focused Assault Oman Giantkiller Utility 12

You spend a moment refocusing your fury and can attack the enemy with renewed vigor.

Encounter ♦ Martial

Free Action Close burst 5

Target: One creature in burst

Effect: The target is considered your quarry and is marked by you until the end of your next turn.

Coordinated Devastation Oman Giantkiller Attack 20

You slice into the enemy, creating a gaping wound that is easy for your allies to target with their attacks.

Daily ♦ Martial, Weapon

Standard Action Melee weapon

Requirement: You must be wielding two melee weapons.

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC (main weapon and off-hand weapon), two attacks

Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage per attack. If both attacks hit, all allies score critical hits against the target on rolls of 18 or higher until the end of your next turn.

If the target is Large or larger and at least one attack hits, all allies score critical hits against the target on rolls of 17 or higher until the end of your next turn. ☼



About the Author

Originally thought to have been raised from a humble Midwestern family, **Chris Tulach** actually fell to Earth in a meteorite-shaped capsule flung from a planet far outside our galaxy. While under the yellow rays of Sol, Chris's nerdity far surpasses that of any normal human. Using this precious gift only for good, he has become the RPGA® Content Designer, responsible for the development and deployment of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® organized play programs.



DANGERS OF THE DEMONWEB

by Logan Bonner

illustrations by Ryan Barger, Wayne England, Ralph Horsley, William O'Connor, and Beth Trott

THE DEMONWEB™ set for the D&D® **Miniatures Game** contains some creatures that haven't appeared in any 4th Edition products—until now. Some of them are new, and others appeared in products published late in the run of edition 3.5 (such as *Monster Manual IV* and *Drow of the Underdark*). This article shows off the Underdark

denizens of the set, including new drow, dracoloths, and some of the traps and hazards you might find when traversing the twisting tunnels and caverns under the earth.

These stats don't all match those on the role-playing side of the *Demonweb* stat cards; they have been adjusted for variety and to help build better

encounters. Most of the monsters are at low paragon tier (levels 11-15), usable alongside drow. A few are at the very top of paragon or low epic, suitable as underlings for really nasty demons.

Check the [Demonweb](#) gallery to see pictures of all the minis from the set.

DEATHCAP

DANGERS ABOUND IN THE FORESTS of exotic fungi that cover the floors and walls of Underdark caves. The deathcap is one of the deadliest of these life forms. Even drow are wary of deathcaps and often carry antidotes to their spores, especially if they expect to be fighting near the giant fungus.

Another fungus, known as a falsecap, looks similar to a deathcap but has a hallucinatory effect instead.

The Deathcap miniature can also be used to represent doomspore (DMG 88).

Deathcap Hazard Level 12 Blaster XP 700

The stem of this mushroom is as thick as a tree trunk, and its cap is wide and red, covered with lumpy yellow spots.

Hazard: A deathcap fills 1 square with difficult terrain. Any creature in the deathcap's space gains cover.

Perception

No check is necessary to notice the deathcap.

Additional Skill: Nature

◆ DC 16: The character identifies the mushroom as a deathcap.

Trigger

When a creature enters the deathcap's space or an adjacent square, one of the deathcap's yellow spore pods ruptures, spewing toxic spores into the air.

Attack

Immediate Reaction Close burst 3

Target: Each creature in burst

Attack: +14 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d8 + 5 poison damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

Miss: Half damage, and no ongoing damage.

Countermeasures

- ◆ A character who moves past a deathcap (but not into its space) can make a DC 20 Acrobatics check to avoid triggering the spores.
- ◆ A character can attack the deathcap (AC 5, other defenses 10; hp 100; resist 20 poison). Destroying the deathcap stops further spore pods from bursting.

Upgrade to Elite (1,400 XP)

- ◆ The deathcap's attack becomes an opportunity action.
- ◆ Increase the deathcap's attack bonus by 2.
- ◆ Increase the Acrobatics DC by 4.

Falsecap Hazard Level 10 Obstacle XP 500

The stem of this mushroom is as thick as a tree trunk, and its cap is wide and red, covered with lumpy yellow spots.

Hazard: A falsecap fills 1 square with difficult terrain. Any creature in the falsecap's space gains cover.

Perception

No check is necessary to notice the falsecap.

Additional Skill: Nature

- ◆ DC 16: The character identifies the mushroom as a falsecap.
- ◆ DC 10-15: The character incorrectly identifies the mushroom as a deathcap.

Trigger

When a creature moves within 5 squares of the falsecap, that creature inhales a hallucinogenic vapor.

Attack

Opportunity Action Close burst 5

Target: The triggering creature in burst

Attack: +13 vs. Will

Hit: The target slides 3 squares. Roll 1d6. 1-3: No other effect. 4-5: The target is also knocked prone. 6: The target is also slowed (save ends).

Countermeasures

- ◆ A character can attack the falsecap (AC 5, other defenses 10; hp 100; resist 20 poison). Destroying the falsecap stops further release of vapor.

ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

Drow alchemists have perfected the creation of alchemical explosives that distribute deathcap spores. See the *Adventurer's Vault*™ supplement for complete alchemy rules.

DEATHCAP SPORES

Level: 12

Category: Poison, volatile

Time: 30 minutes

Component Cost: See below

Market Price: 1,500 gp

Key Skill: Nature or Thievery

Harvested deathcap spores are contained in a ball of glass or leather, crafted to burst open and distribute the spores into the air.

Deathcap Spores Level 12

When it bursts, this vessel vents a cloud of yellow powder.

Alchemical Item 500 gp

Power (Consumable ◆ Poison): Standard Action. Make an attack: Area burst 1 within 10; +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 poison damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).



DEATHGRASP SARCOPHAGUS

A DEATHGRASP SARCOPHAGUS IS FILLED WITH RAVENOUS undead and animated by their unnatural hunger. It seeks only to capture living victims for its denizens to devour. When it attacks, its lid flies open and a cloud of wispy shadow and skeletal hands claws at a creature, dragging it into the sarcophagus. Then the lid snaps shut, trapping the creature inside.

DEATHGRASP SARCOPHAGUS LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana or Religion check.

DC 15: Sometimes a sarcophagus can serve as a conduit to the Shadowfell or channel the malice of a potent undead intelligence. Such an item fulfills the craving of its undead masters for the essence of the living. Consuming a living creature satisfies them for a moment, but they are never satiated.

DC 20: High-ranking drow who make pacts with demons, especially Orcus, find eternal existence in undeath. Deathgrasp sarcophagi often house these drow, who are especially voracious for life force.

Deathgrasp Sarcophagus Level 10 Obstacle Trap XP 700

This sarcophagus crafted from dark metal is covered in gruesome iconography. A leering skull with ram horns stares forth from it.

Trap: A deathgrasp sarcophagus occupies 1 square.

Perception

No check is necessary to notice the sarcophagus.

Additional Skill: Arcana or Religion

◆ See the Lore entry above.

Trigger

When a creature moves within 5 squares of the deathgrasp sarcophagus, the sarcophagus rolls initiative.

Attack—Claws of the Hungry Dead

Standard Action **Melee 4**

Target: One living creature

Attack: +13 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is grabbed and pulled 3 squares. If the target is adjacent to the sarcophagus, it is entombed inside the sarcophagus. The sarcophagus can have one creature entombed at a time.

An entombed creature is immobilized. It has line of sight or line of effect only to the sarcophagus, and no creature has line of sight or line of effect to the entombed creature. A creature is released if the sarcophagus is destroyed or by one of the countermeasures listed below.

While it has a creature entombed, the sarcophagus uses its *feed the dead* attack instead of *claws of the hungry dead*.

Attack—Feed the Dead

Standard Action **Special**

Target: One entombed creature

Attack: +13 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d8 + 5 necrotic damage, and the target cannot spend healing surges (save ends).

Countermeasures

- ◆ A character can make a DC 18 Thievery check to release an entombed creature. The released creature falls prone in a square adjacent to the sarcophagus.
- ◆ A character can attack the sarcophagus (AC 5, other defenses 10; hp 100). Dealing 25 or more damage to the sarcophagus with one blow causes it to release any entombed creature inside it. The released creature falls prone in a square adjacent to the sarcophagus.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Characters might find large groups of deathgrasp sarcophagi in ancient mausoleums, or contend with drow guardians who protect the sanctity of an important tomb.

Level 10 Encounter (XP 2,450)

- ◆ 1 deathgrasp sarcophagus (level 10 obstacle)
- ◆ 2 drow warriors (level 11 lurker; MM 94)
- ◆ 2 blade spiders (level 10 brute; MM 246)
- ◆ 1 troglodyte curse chanter (level 8 controller; MM 252)



DEVIL

THE DROW HAVE LONG TRAFFICKED WITH DEMONS, so devils rarely travel near drow settlements. A rare exception is the soulrider devil, which prefers drow and eladrin prey.

SOULRIDER DEVIL

A SOULRIDER DRAINS THE LIFE FORCE of its host to power its attacks. If this drain kills the host, the soulrider devil detaches (see the unattached soulrider devil stat block) and attempts to escape, seeking out another victim.

SOULRIDER TACTICS

Soulriders seek out humanoid creatures to act as their hosts. But they can only attach to these creatures outside of combat, as the process takes the length of a ritual to complete (10 minutes). In combat, the devils use their hosts' abilities, or attack with claws if encountered away from a host creature.

SOULRIDER DEVIL LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful Religion check.

DC 20: A grotesque parasite, the soulrider devil attaches itself to the body of a humanoid creature—most often a drow or eladrin—and takes over. It feeds off its host's soul and controls the creature's motion and actions. The host is fully aware what is happening to it, but rare is the being with the strength of will to resist the horror

Unattached Soulrider Devil Level 10 Minion

Small immortal humanoid (devil)

XP 125

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +7; darkvision

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 24; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22

Resist 5 fire

Speed 8, climb 5

⬇ **Claw** (standard; at-will)

+15 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal

Str 12 (+6) **Dex** 22 (+11) **Wis** 14 (+7)

Con 7 (+3) **Int** 12 (+6) **Cha** 17 (+8)

Soulrider Devil Eladrin Arcanist Level 9 Artillery

Medium immortal humanoid (devil)

XP 400

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +7; darkvision

HP 72; **Bloodied** 36

AC 21; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 22

Resist 5 fire; **Vulnerable** While the soulrider devil would be dazed or stunned, it does not suffer the normal effects of that condition. Instead, on its turn it attacks its nearest ally. While in this state, it cannot use *soulrider sacrifice*.

Speed 6

⬇ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+16 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage.

⬅ **Black Chill Blast** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Cold, Necrotic**

Close blast 5; +14 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 5 cold damage plus 1d8 + 5 necrotic damage. **Miss:** 1d8 + 5 necrotic damage.

✱ **Acid Flame** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Acid, Fire**

Area burst 2 within 10; +14 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 6 fire damage, and ongoing 10 acid damage (save ends). **Miss:** 1d10 + 6 fire damage.

Soulrider Sacrifice (minor; at-will)

The soulrider devil takes 10 damage and recharges *black chill blast* or *acid flame*. If the soulrider devil would be killed by this damage, it instead kills its host and becomes unattached (see the stat block above), and it shifts 3 squares as a free action.

Fey Step (move; encounter) ♦ **Teleportation**

The soulrider devil teleports 5 squares.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal

Str 8 (+3) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 16 (+7)

Con 12 (+5) **Int** 22 (+10) **Cha** 17 (+7)

Equipment longsword

Soulrider Devil Drow Warrior Level 11 Skirmisher

Medium immortal humanoid (devil)

XP 600

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +5; darkvision

HP 113; **Bloodied** 56

AC 25; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22

Resist 5 fire; **Vulnerable** While the soulrider devil would be dazed or stunned, it does not suffer the normal effects of that condition. Instead, it attacks its nearest ally. While in this state, it cannot use *soulrider sacrifice*.

Speed 6

⬇ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Poison, Weapon**

+16 vs. AC; 2d8 + 3 poison damage.

⬇ **Charging Swipe** (standard; usable while wielding

a longsword; encounter) ♦ **Poison, Weapon**

The soulrider devil makes a charge attack; on a hit, it deals 2d8 extra poison damage, then shifts 3 squares.

✶ **Darkfire** (minor; encounter)

Ranged 10; +14 vs. Reflex; until the end of the soulrider devil's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attackers, and the target cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.

⬅ **Darkflame Blade** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Fire, Necrotic**

Close burst 1; +16 vs. AC; 3d8 + 3 fire and necrotic damage. **Miss:** 2d8 fire damage. **Effect:** The soulrider devil shifts 4 squares after making all the attacks.

Soulrider Sacrifice (minor; at-will)

The soulrider devil takes 10 damage and recharges *charging swipe* or *darkflame blade*. If the soulrider devil would be killed by this damage, it instead kills its host and becomes unattached (see the stat block above), and it shifts 3 squares as a free action.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal

Str 14 (+7) **Dex** 23 (+11) **Wis** 10 (+5)

Con 17 (+8) **Int** 15 (+7) **Cha** 15 (+7)

Equipment leather armor, longsword

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Soulriders are vile creatures, and the only creatures that can stand to be near them are other devils, allies of devils, and their hapless hosts.

Level 8 Encounter (XP 1,850)

- ♦ 2 soulrider devil eladrin arcanists (level 9 artillery)
- ♦ 2 cambion hellswords (level 8 brute; MM 39)
- ♦ 1 pain devil (level 8 soldier, *Manual of the Planes* 126)



DROW

MANY VARIETIES OF DROW DWELL IN THE UNDERDARK and in the twisted reaches of the Demonweb. This entry presents some of each, including opponents that can be PCs' first encounters with the race, and villains they might face when they reach higher levels and travel into the Demonweb.

Drow lore can be found in the *Monster Manual*, and draegloth lore appears in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Guide*.

DROW ADVENTURER

MOST DROW STAY WITHIN THEIR CITIES, or keep out of sight when in the world above, but the drow adventurer is a rare breed. With a curiosity that can be sated only by exploration, the drow adventurer retains few trappings of the drow homeland and sets out with little training. An adventurer might be evil, working in the interest of the Spider Queen, or might not care about the goals of drow society and be interested in only personal objectives.

Drow Adventurer	Level 7 Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid	XP 300
Initiative +10	Senses Perception +6; darkvision
HP 79; Bloodied 39	
AC 21; Fortitude 18, Reflex 21, Will 19	
Speed 7	
⚔ Fangblade (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison, Weapon	
+12 vs. AC; 2d8 + 2 poison damage (crit 1d8 + 18).	
☞ Shuriken (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison, Weapon	
Ranged 6/12; +13 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 poison damage.	
⚔ Mobile Melee Attack (standard; usable while wielding a fangblade; at-will)	
The drow adventurer can move up to 3 squares and make one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. It doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of its attack.	
⚔ Venomous Slash (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Poison, Weapon	
Required fangblade, +10 vs. AC; 3d8 + 5 poison damage (crit 1d8 + 29), and all enemies adjacent to the target take 6 poison damage.	
☞ Darkfire (minor; encounter)	
Ranged 10; +10 vs. Reflex; until the end of the drow adventurer's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attackers, and the target cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.	
Alignment Any	Languages Common, Elven
Skills Acrobatics +13, Intimidate +5, Stealth +15	
Str 12 (+4)	Dex 20 (+8) Wis 16 (+6)
Con 15 (+5)	Int 12 (+4) Cha 10 (+3)
Equipment chainmail, fangblade, 20 shuriken	

DROW ADVENTURER TACTICS

The drow adventurer is intended as a simpler opponent than a drow warrior, usable at lower levels. A drow adventurer opens with shuriken attacks. Once engaged in close combat, the adventurer uses *mobile melee attack* as much as possible.

SPIDERBOUND DROW WARRIOR

IDENTIFIED BY A DISTINCTIVE SPIDER-SHAPED SHIELD, the spiderbound drow warrior has formed a blood bond with a specific spider. The warrior's shield can transform into that creature, which returns to shield form when slain.

A step above the rank and file in drow society, the spiderbound gain a small measure of status from the bond they forge. Groups of spiderbound warriors are rare. Most lead normal warriors or serve as bodyguards to more powerful drow.

Spiderbound Drow Warrior	Level 13 Soldier
Medium fey humanoid	XP 800
Initiative +12 Senses Perception +7; darkvision	
HP 128; Bloodied 64; see also <i>surrounding webs</i>	
AC 30; Fortitude 26, Reflex 25, Will 22	
Resist 10 poison	
Speed 6	
⚔ Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+20 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the spiderbound drow warrior's next turn.	
🕸 Darkfire (minor; encounter)	
Ranged 10; +16 vs. Reflex; until the end of the warrior's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attackers, and the target cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.	
↶ Surrounding Webs (immediate reaction, when first bloodied; encounter)	
Close burst 2; all squares in the burst become difficult terrain for enemies until the end of the encounter.	
Spider Shield (minor; recharge ⚡)	
The warrior's shield turns into a spider shield minion (see that stat block, below), which appears in an adjacent square. The warrior takes a -4 penalty to AC and Reflex. The minion can take one standard, move, and minor action on its turn as normal, but it acts on the warrior's initiative and must be directed. When the minion is destroyed, the shield returns to the warrior. This power cannot recharge while that warrior's spider minion is active.	
Alignment Evil Languages Common, Elven	
Skills Intimidate +10, Stealth +12	
Str 24 (+13) Dex 19 (+10) Wis 12 (+7)	
Con 16 (+9) Int 14 (+8) Cha 14 (+8)	
Equipment chainmail, longsword, spider shield	

Spider Shield	Level 13 Minion
Small natural beast (spider)	XP –
Initiative (on warrior's turn) Senses Perception +9; darkvision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 25; Fortitude 23, Reflex 24, Will 22	
Speed 5, climb 5	
⚔ Bite (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison	
+14 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
Alignment Unaligned Languages –	
Str 13 (+7) Dex 20 (+11) Wis 17 (+9)	
Con 17 (+9) Int 2 (+2) Cha 9 (+5)	

SPIDERBOUND DROW WARRIOR TACTICS

After engaging a foe in melee, the spiderbound drow warrior commands its shield to transform, then has the spider shift into a flanking position. If serving as a bodyguard, the warrior commands the spider to help block passages and keep attackers away from the person protected.

DROW ASSASSIN

A SUPERB KILLER, THE DROW ASSASSIN is tasked with eliminating the most persistent foes of the drow. Assassins do not rove about—they are dispatched only when a major threat attacks a drow community or is sabotaging its leaders' plans.





Drow Assassin	Level 14 Elite Lurker
Medium fey humanoid	XP 2,000
Initiative +18	Senses Perception +16; darkvision
HP 206; Bloodied 103; see also <i>cloud of darkness</i>	
AC 30; Fortitude 24, Reflex 30, Will 28; see also <i>stealth shift</i>	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 7	
Action Points 1	
⚔ Rapier (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison, Weapon	
+20 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 poison damage.	
🏹 Hand Crossbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison, Weapon	
Ranged 10/20; +19 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 poison damage.	
⚔ or 🏹 Double Attack (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison, Weapon	
The drow assassin makes a rapier or hand crossbow attack, shifts up to 2 squares, then makes another rapier or hand crossbow attack.	
🏹 Stinging Bolt (standard; recharge ☞ ☞) ♦ Poison, Weapon	
Requires hand crossbow; ranged 10/20; +19 vs. AC; 3d6 + 6 poison damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends). First Failed Save: Increase the ongoing poison damage by 5.	
☞ Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)	
Close burst 1 (close burst 2 while bloodied); this power creates a cloud of darkness that remains in place until the end of the drow assassin's next turn. The cloud blocks line of sight for all creatures except the drow assassin. Any creature entirely within the cloud (except the drow assassin) is blinded until it exits.	
Call to the Shadow (standard; at-will)	
The drow assassin's <i>cloud of darkness</i> power recharges, and the drow assassin uses it immediately.	
Combat Advantage	
The drow assassin deals 2d6 extra damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.	
Stealth Shift (immediate reaction, when an attack misses the drow assassin and the drow assassin is hidden from the attacker; at-will)	
The drow assassin shifts 1 square.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Elven
Skills Acrobatics +19, Athletics +14, Dungeoneering +16, Intimidate +12, Stealth +21, Thievery +19	
Str 14 (+9)	Dex 24 (+14)
Con 13 (+8)	Int 14 (+9)
	Cha 16 (+10)
Equipment leather armor, rapier, hand crossbow, 20 bolts, cloak	

DROW ASSASSIN TACTICS

Stealth is the drow assassin's best friend. Keep the stealth and "targeting what you can't see" rules handy

(PH pages 188 and 281). It chooses ambush sites that contain plenty of natural cover and takes advantage of that to stay hidden, using *cloud of darkness* to gain total concealment if it can't manage that any other way. The assassin usually makes hand crossbow attacks but can hold its own in melee if necessary.

DROW DEMONBINDER

DROW WHO SWEAR FEALTY TO A POWERFUL DEMON might be encountered alongside it. A drow demonbinder is imbued with some amount of that demon's power and behaves much as it does.

Drow Demonbinder (Glabrezu Servant)	Level 19 Brute
Medium fey humanoid (demon)	XP 2,400
Initiative +12	Senses Perception +10; darkvision
HP 218; Bloodied 109	
AC 32; Fortitude 32, Reflex 31, Will 29	
Speed 7	
⚔ Demonic Strike (standard; at-will)	
+22 vs. AC; 2d10 + 8 damage.	
⚔ Pincer Grab (standard; recharge ☞ ☞)	
+20 vs. Reflex; 4d10 + 7 damage, and the target is grabbed.	
🏹 Darkfire (minor; encounter)	
Ranged 10; +22 vs. Reflex; until the end of the demonbinder's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attackers, and the target cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.	
☞ Chaos Word (standard; encounter)	
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +22 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 8 damage. This damage bypasses all resistances.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal, Elven
Skills Arcana +20, Bluff +17, Intimidate +19, Stealth +14	
Str 27 (+17)	Dex 16 (+12)
Con 18 (+13)	Int 22 (+15)
	Cha 17 (+12)
Equipment leather armor	

DROW DEMONBINDER (GLABREZU SERVANT) TACTICS

This creature is a straightforward brute but has one close attack. It might save *chaos word* until after a character uses a power that grants resistance, or try to hit characters who already have resist all.

A drow glabrezu servant has an extra pair of arms growing from its overlarge shoulders, each of which ends in a massive pincer. This demonbinder's face is also elongated slightly, almost bestial in aspect, and features a mouth full of sharp teeth.

Drow Demonbinder (Marilith Servant) Level 20 Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid (demon) XP 2,800

Initiative +18 Senses Perception +12; darkvision

HP 195; Bloodied 97

AC 33; Fortitude 34, Reflex 32, Will 30

Speed 7

⊕ **Demonic Strike** (standard; at-will)

the demonbinder makes two attacks against the same target; +25 vs. AC; 2d6 + 2 damage.

⬇ **Arms of the Marilith** (standard; recharge ⓧ ⓧ)

The demonbinder shifts 3 squares and makes three *demonic strike* attacks (six attack rolls total) at any points during this move.

⬅ **Cloud of Darkness** (minor; encounter) ⬆ **Zone**

Close burst 1; this power creates a cloud of darkness that remains in place until the end of the demonbinder's next turn. The cloud blocks line of sight for all creatures except the demonbinder. Any creature entirely within the cloud (except the demonbinder) is blinded until it exits.

Slithering Movement (move; encounter)

The demonbinder shifts its speed.

Alignment Chaotic evil Languages Abyssal, Elven

Skills Arcana +19, Intimidate +20, Stealth +23

Str 16 (+13) Dex 22 (+16) Wis 14 (+12)

Con 27 (+18) Int 18 (+14) Cha 17 (+13)

Equipment leather armor

DEMONBINDER MARILITH SERVANT TACTICS

After moving into melee, the demonbinder uses *cloud of darkness* to gain combat advantage against a target, then attacks. It uses *arms of the marilith* when available so that enemies lose track of its location.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Drow fight alongside a variety of Underdark and Abyssal creatures, from lowly troglodytes to powerful demons.

Level 7 Encounter (XP 1,400)

- ◆ 1 drow adventurer (level 7 skirmisher)
- ◆ 2 gricks (level 7 brute; MM 145)
- ◆ 2 troglodyte maulers (level 6 soldier; MM 252)

Level 13 Encounter (XP 4,400)

- ◆ 1 drow assassin (level 14 elite lurker)
- ◆ 2 spiderbound drow warriors (level 13 soldier)
- ◆ 1 drow arachnomancer (level 13 artillery; MM 94)

Level 19 Encounter (XP 12,800)

- ◆ 1 goristro (level 19 elite brute; MM 55)
- ◆ 1 demonbinder glabrezu servant (level 19 brute)
- ◆ 1 demonbinder marilith servant (level 20 skirmisher)
- ◆ 1 fire archon ash disciple (level 20 artillery; MM 19)



SCYTHERJAW

THESE CONSTRUCTS RESEMBLE ENORMOUS BEAR TRAPS. They snap open and shut, bearing down with the razor-sharp fangs that give them their name.

Scythejaw		Level 9 Lurker
Medium natural animate (blind, construct)		XP 400
Initiative +9	Senses Perception +12; blindsight 10	
HP 82; Bloodied 41		
AC 23; Fortitude 22, Reflex 20, Will 21; see also <i>clampdown</i>		
Immune disease, poison		
Speed 5		
⊕ Iron Jaws (standard; at-will)		
+14 vs. AC; 1d12 + 6 damage.		
⬇ Clampdown (standard; at-will)		
+12 vs. Reflex; 2d12 + 6 damage, and the target is grabbed and takes ongoing 10 damage until it escapes. The grab ends if the scythejaw attacks or fails to sustain the grab. While it has a target grabbed, the scythejaw gains a +4 bonus to all defenses.		
Vicious Jaws		
The scythejaw deals 1d8 extra damage on melee attacks against any target it has combat advantage against, and 1d8 extra damage on opportunity attacks.		
Lie in Wait		
At the start of combat, a scythejaw hides behind a false floor or wall panel. In this state, it gains a +5 bonus to Stealth checks. It readies, then attacks when a creature moves into its reach.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Skills Stealth +10		
Str 14 (+6)	Dex 12 (+5)	Wis 17 (+7)
Con 22 (+10)	Int 1 (-1)	Cha 12 (+5)

SCYTHERJAW TACTICS

Before combat begins, a scythejaw behaves much like a trap. Its *lie in wait* power is essentially a trigger that causes it to activate. You can add a couple of scythejaws to an encounter, one near where the PCs start and another farther into the area, perhaps in front of an artillery monster or a spot the party needs to reach. This way, one triggers early on and the other later to spice up the second part of the fight.

Explosive Scythejaw		Level 13 Lurker
Medium natural animate (blind, construct)		XP 800
Initiative +12	Senses Perception +10; blindsight 10	
HP 108; Bloodied 54; see also <i>clockwork timer</i>		
AC 26; Fortitude 26, Reflex 22, Will 24; see also <i>clampdown</i>		
Immune disease, poison		
Speed 7		
⊕ Iron Jaws (standard; at-will)		
+18 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage.		
⬇ Clampdown (standard; at-will)		
+16 vs. Reflex; 2d12 + 8 damage, and the target is grabbed and takes ongoing 10 damage until it escapes. The grab ends if the scythejaw attacks or fails to sustain the grab. While it has a target grabbed, the scythejaw gains a +4 bonus to all defenses.		
Clockwork Timer (when first bloodied; encounter)		
While bloodied, at the end of each creature's turn the explosive scythejaw takes damage equal to its healing surge value.		
⚡ Timed Explosion (when reduced to 0 hit points by <i>clockwork timer</i> ; encounter)		
Close burst 3; +16 vs. Reflex; 3d12 + 6 damage. Miss: Half damage.		
Lie in Wait		
At the start of combat, a scythejaw hides behind a false floor or wall panel. In this state, it gains a +5 bonus to Stealth checks. It readies, then attacks when a creature moves into reach.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Skills Stealth +13		
Str 16 (+9)	Dex 14 (+8)	Wis 19 (+10)
Con 24 (+13)	Int 1 (+1)	Cha 12 (+7)

EXPLOSIVE SCYTHERJAW TACTICS

To make this monster fun, the PCs need to know that they're facing a countdown. Visual effects are one way to accomplish this: For example, when *clockwork timer* activates, a series of gems on the scythejaw's body glow brightly, and as each creature take its turn, one gem flickers and then fades out. You can also use multiple explosive scythejaws in consecutive encounters. Slight modifications to individual scythejaws encourages different tactics for each situation. Perhaps stunning delays the explosion in one case, or a lightning attack destroys a countdown gem prematurely.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Scythejaws can be found in the lairs of any creature capable of skillful trapcrafting.

Level 10 Encounter (XP 2,700)

- ◆ 2 scythejaws (level 9 lurker)
- ◆ 2 grimlock ambushers (level 11 skirmisher; MM 148)
- ◆ 4 troglodyte warriors (level 12 minion; MM 252)

SPIDER

Though often encountered among drow, spiders can also be found alongside the dark elves' demonic allies.

PHASEWEB SPIDER

Created from unstable Abyssal substance, a phaseweb spider's shape morphs continually so that it jumps between planes, effectively teleporting.

PHASEWEB SPIDER LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

DC 20: Phaseweb spiders can be found in the Abyss and in the Underdark. They dwell near demon hordes or in twisting caverns near drow cities. They prey on all sorts of creatures, especially humanoids, and prefer their prey large enough to fight back. A phaseweb spider's essence is split between planes, and it can easily move between them.

DC 25: Sometimes phaseweb spiders scatter translucent phasewebs within caverns. A phaseweb can stay active for years after being abandoned.

Phaseweb Spider	Level 12 Skirmisher
Large elemental beast (spider)	XP 700
Initiative +14 Senses Perception +7; darkvision, tremorsense 5	
HP 122; Bloodied 61; see also <i>web spray</i>	
AC 26; Fortitude 24, Reflex 26, Will 22	
Speed 7, climb 7 (spider climb); phasing; see also <i>phaseweb stride</i>	
Ⓢ Bite (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison	
+17 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
⚡ Web Spray (standard; recharges when first bloodied)	
Close blast 3; +14 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 5 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).	
Join the Fray (move; recharge Ⓜ Ⓜ) ♦ Teleportation	
The phaseweb spider teleports 3 squares, or it teleports adjacent to any drow, demon, or spider creature within its line of sight.	
Phaseweb Stride (move; at-will) ♦ Teleportation	
If the phaseweb spider is in the space of a phaseweb (see below), it teleports to any other square in the space of a phaseweb within its line of sight.	
Alignment Chaotic evil Languages –	
Skills Athletics +14, Stealth +17	
Str 16 (+9) Dex 23 (+12) Wis 13 (+7)	
Con 18 (+10) Int 2 (+2) Cha 9 (+5)	

Phaseweb Trap Level 12 Obstacle XP 700

This spiderweb is almost transparent and seems to fade in and out of existence.

Trap: This trap consists of three phasewebs. A single phaseweb fills 4 contiguous squares, which are difficult terrain for non-spider creatures.

Perception

- ♦ DC 25: The character notices the phaseweb.

Additional Skill: Arcana

- ♦ DC 16: The character identifies the web as the creation of a phaseweb spider, and recalls its properties.

Trigger

When a creature enters or begins its turn in a phaseweb's space, the trap attacks that creature.

Attack

Opportunity Action **Melee** 1

Target: The triggering creature

Attack: +17 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is restrained (save ends). If the target is moved so that it is no longer within the space of a phaseweb, the restrained condition ends. *First Failed Save:* The target is also weakened as long as it is restrained. Choose another square containing a phaseweb within 20 squares of the target. The target is teleported to that square and takes 3d8 +5 psychic damage, and is no longer restrained.

Countermeasures

- ♦ A character restrained by a phaseweb can make a DC 20 Acrobatics, Arcana, or Athletics check as a standard action to make a saving throw against the restrained condition.
- ♦ A character can attack the web (AC 4, other defenses 12; hp 60; insubstantial, vulnerable 10 fire). Dealing 60 damage destroys the entire 4-square area.

PHASEWEB SPIDER TACTICS

A phaseweb spider lays webs around its lair to catch prey and lurks in one of these, waiting for a creature to stumble in. It then teleports adjacent to the trapped creature and attacks. When fighting alongside allies, it sets up combat advantage by teleporting into flanking positions when it can, and immobilizing prey with its *web spray*.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Phaseweb spiders are usually encountered with drow and low-level demons.

Level 12 Encounter (XP 3,700)

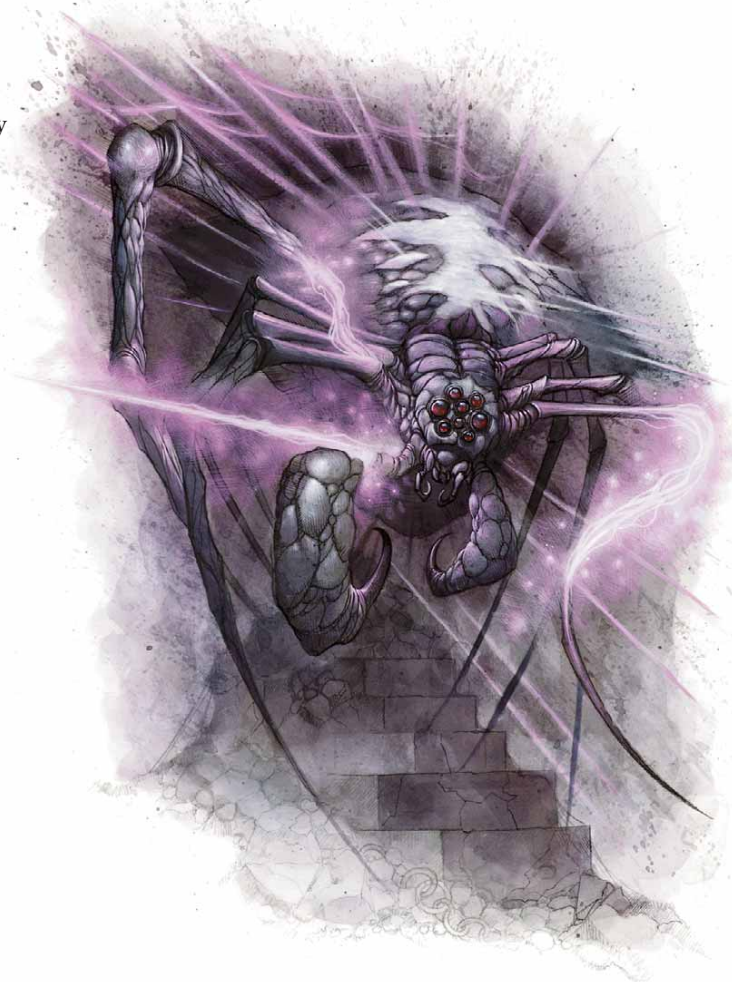
- ♦ 2 phaseweb spiders (level 12 lurker)
- ♦ 1 phaseweb (level 12 obstacle)
- ♦ 1 draegloth (level 13 elite brute, *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide* 249)

Level 14 Encounter (XP 5,400)

- ♦ 2 phaseweb spiders (level 12 lurker)
- ♦ 1 drow arachnomancer (level 13 artillery)
- ♦ 2 drow blademasters (level 13 elite skirmisher)

About the Author

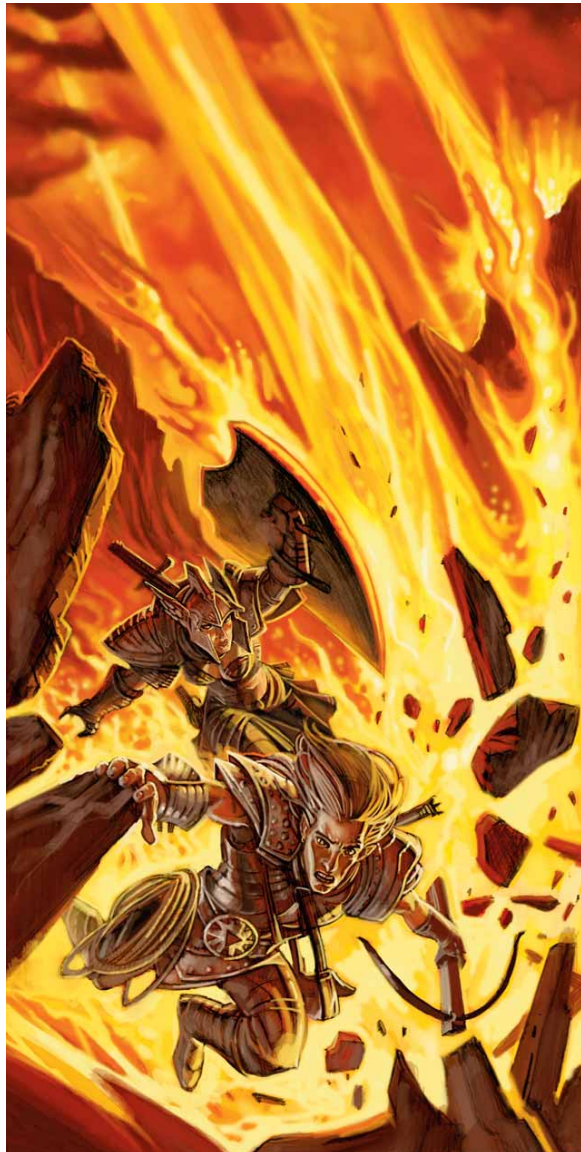
Logan Bonner traded the Great Plains of Kansa for Seattle when he landed a job at Wizards of the Coast. As a mechanical designer, he has worked on *Dungeon Tiles*™, *D&D Miniatures*™, *Forgotten Realms*® *Player's Guide*, and *Adventurer's Vault*™.



REIMAGINING THE PLANES

BY RICH BAKER AND JAMES WYATT

illustration by Steve Ellis



Rich: If I had to pick one D&D book over the years that just rocked my world, I might have to pick the 1st Edition *Manual of the Planes*. I started playing D&D back in the days of 1st Edition Advanced DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, and the *Manual of the Planes* just blew me away with its vision of infinite possibilities. The Great Wheel held up for twenty years as the blueprint for the heavens and hells of countless D&D campaigns—but one of our ongoing challenges with the 4th Edition design process was to take nothing for granted, to challenge all assumptions, to look at every single component of the game and evaluate how it helped or hurt the experience at the table. In that light, we took a good long look at the cosmology of the D&D game, and said to ourselves, “This is all great stuff, but how can we make it better? What’s working, and what isn’t?”

This is a brief look at how we answered those questions.

WHAT ARE PLANES?

James: I have notes from a meeting about the cosmology on July 27, 2005. We started off talking about what the planes have been, historically—what purpose they served in the game. Here’s the list:

- Exotic adventuring environments
- Homes of deities
- Homes of outsiders and elementals
- Alignment focused (outer planes)
- Elemental energy (inner planes)
- Means of travel
- Intrusions into “normal” world
- Where you go when you die

Only one of those has gone away: the planes aren’t

really about alignment any more. They’re much less a means of travel than they used to be (we don’t explain teleportation as jaunting through the Astral Sea), but the Shadow Walk ritual still lets characters use the Shadowfell for speedy travel across the world.

THE BROKEN PARTS

Rich: Naturally, you might be wondering what sorts of problems we thought the Great Wheel caused. There were many things we loved about the cosmology of earlier editions, but we definitely saw some difficult friction points that we wanted to work on. Here are a few of the points we knew we wanted a revised cosmology to address:

- ♦ **The Elemental Planes were unusable.** With the exception of the plane of Air, they were pretty much instantly lethal to unprotected characters. Most of the relatively few adventures set in these places actually took place in air pockets in the otherwise hostile planes. Places you can’t go to aren’t very useful for the game.
- ♦ **Infinite planes stagger the imagination.** If things were *really* infinite, you could walk for millions of miles across the burning plain of Avernus and not actually be any bit closer to your goal. And how many devils does it take to fill an infinite plane with a suitable population density? DMs just handwaved these questions before, but we wondered if it was really necessary for everything to be infinite when most D&D games visited just a few specific points of interest in each plane.
- ♦ **Good planes were boring.** We’ve made Herculean efforts to make that less true in Planescape and various editions of the *Manual of the Planes*, but

it was still true: Our fondness for alignment-based symmetry made us fill the Great Wheel with places like Arcadia, Bytopia, and Elysium.

- ♦ **Demons and devils were too similar.** Two of our iconic monster groups in the game were essentially indistinguishable from each other. We wanted to take steps to give them each their own space to stand in.

ETHEREAL MADNESS

James: The Ethereal Plane might be one of the most broken parts of the old D&D cosmology, and I don't think it's missed much. Mind you, I say this as the author of *City of the Spider Queen*, which featured a bizarre fortress at the end of the adventure that existed in both the Material Plane and the Ethereal Plane. That fortress exists, though, not because the Ethereal Plane was cool or interesting, but because high-level characters in 3rd Edition could break an adventure by "going ethereal" (going into the Ethereal Plane) and bypassing barriers and obstacles. Rather than come up with ways to prevent them from going ethereal, I designed that adventure to challenge them when they did.

We cut a great big knot of crazy rules when we killed the Ethereal Plane. Ghosts could just be insubstantial and phasing—they didn't need to exist on another plane (and have a special ability that let them manifest in the world). All the complicated rules about what effects passed from the world to the Ethereal Plane (and vice versa)—like *magic missile* and the gaze of a basilisk—could just fade into history. If we want effects in the game that let characters walk through walls, we can still have them—they just give the characters phasing, rather than transporting them to another plane of existence.

Our brutal solution to the problems of the Ethereal Plane was actually an expression of a key principle:

Planes should be places you go to, not just places you travel through. The Ethereal Plane had previously been a highway first and foremost, rarely a destination. So it went away in favor of places characters would want to visit and stay a while in.

THE REALMS CONNECTION

Rich: You might be surprised to learn that the reinvention of the cosmology started in the Forgotten Realms revision work. Back in the spring of 2005, the Realms revision team—myself, Phil Athans, and Bruce Cordell—got around to looking closely at the 3rd Edition Realms cosmology. The 3E FR cosmology took advantage of some of the conceptual space offered in the 3rd Edition *Manual of the Planes* to create a "Great Tree" cosmology that broke away from the Great Wheel of past editions. The Great Tree consisted only of those planar elements actually present in the setting—so the Realms version of, say, Asgard didn't need to have palaces for Odin and the Norse gods. But it was clear to us that the Great Tree had also introduced some problems, and hadn't gained a lot of traction with the fans. Over the course of several concept meetings, we worked out the new World Axis cosmology of two infinite media planes dotted with specific astral and elemental domains, and two parallel worlds to serve as Faerie and Shadow—both concepts that had been important in Realms fiction in 2nd and 3rd Edition.

I realized that this cosmology represented an elegant chassis that might have application beyond the Realms. More to the point, I knew that we had a few headaches in our various game worlds caused by the use of different cosmological models, and I hoped to head those off at the pass in 4E. So Phil, Bruce, and I went to the original Orcus team (Rob Heinsoo, Andy Collins, and James Wyatt) and said, "Hey, we've got a cosmology model that might work pretty well for the

core game." We had a discussion out in the courtyard of the old WotC building on a sunny summer day, and by the end of that talk, everyone was on board.

CHAOS—THE GOOD KIND

James: The Elemental Chaos has replaced the Elemental Planes of past editions. It owes a lot to ancient Near Eastern mythology, where gods are often portrayed as forming the world out of a pre-existing chaos. (Marduk's battle with Tiamat in Babylonian myth is a good example.) It's the raw material from which the world was made, the jumble of elemental matter and energy that provided the building-blocks of creation.

We felt there was a strong mythic resonance to a single Chaos plane, but more importantly, it was just a better place to adventure in. As Rich pointed out, the Elemental Plane of Air was the only one of the old Elemental Planes that wasn't inherently deadly to adventurers. Even the classic depiction of the City of Brass on the cover of the first *Dungeon Master's Guide* shows a city beneath a fiery, air-filled sky. Adventurers need air to breathe (and to let them move around, which was the problem with the old Plane of Earth), so mixing air with the other elements seemed like a no-brainer. From there, it's a pretty small step to just mixing all the elements together in a great hodgepodge.

There was a less obvious benefit to replacing the four Elemental Planes with a single Elemental Chaos: eliminating needless (and often silly) symmetry. The four Elemental Planes in their day spawned four additional Para-Elemental Planes where those planes intersected. Magma and ice were pretty exciting, but the need for symmetry also gave us smoke and ooze, which are not the most compelling elements. The intersection of the Elemental Planes and the Energy Planes (positive and negative) created eight Quasi-

Elemental Planes.

The Elemental Chaos is, by its nature, a place where all the elements meet and jumble together. We can create elemental creatures and environments of thunder and lightning without needing to fit a Quasi-Elemental Plane of Lightning into the cosmology. We can make magma brutes without a symmetrical need to throw in ooze brutes as well. And we can design truly fantastic locations within the Chaos, beginning but not ending with the City of Brass—locations that include a mixture of classic elements, especially including air to breathe and ground to stand on.

WORLD AXIS

Rich: I came up with the term “World Axis” to describe the new cosmology, because in this look at the multiverse the mortal world is an axis or link between the two infinite planes—the Astral Sea and the Elemental Chaos. Anytime we discussed this cosmology we drew bobbin- or spool-shaped diagrams up on the white boards in the office. The diagram on page 11 of the new *Manual of the Planes* is a lot like those diagrams. Anyway, World Axis sounds cooler than the Great Bobbin. It nods to the concept of the axis mundi, the idea that there is some place that’s the center of the world—although in this case, it’s the world that lies at the center of the cosmology. Plus, I’m a Blue Oyster Cult fan, and there are a couple of BOC songs (*Les Invisibles*, *Astronomy*) that play with the concept. So if you don’t like the term, you can blame Blue Oyster Cult.

THE UNIVERSAL CHASSIS

Rich: The crucial part of the concept is that the chassis or framework of the cosmology—the infinite media and the parallel worlds—stays the same from campaign setting to campaign setting, but the specific

locales and deities within that framework can (and should) change to reflect the world your game is set in. So why is it so important that all D&D worlds should use that same cosmological chassis? Two answers: monster origins and spell effects. These are important because they’re hardwired into the game. We don’t want to create settings where you have to change some piece of information in the monster stat block to fit it into the setting. Likewise, we want the same spell (power, ritual, or magic item, really) to work the same way in each setting, regardless of cosmology. If we create a +3 *shadowlayer sword*, we don’t want the DM to have to work out what’s a shadow monster and what isn’t. Likewise, the *shadow crossing* ritual ought to work the same way in any setting. We don’t want to print settings with long lists of exceptions and modifications to powers and effects. It’s better to use a setting’s “exceptionalism currency” to deal with the specific locales and entities you have to deal with, not the mechanical workings of planar creatures and travels.

THE EBERRON FALLOUT

James: We didn’t ever plan to change Eberron the way we changed the Forgotten Realms, but the cosmology ended up being one of the most significant revisions to the world. For all the reasons Rich outlined above, it doesn’t make a lot of sense to create different campaign settings with vastly different cosmological structures. We want Eberron players to be able to buy a book like *Manual of the Planes* and use it in their games. In 3rd Edition, books like the two *Fiendish Codex* volumes were very difficult for Eberron players and DMs to use, not just because of Eberron’s changes to the planar cosmology (lacking both a Hell and an Abyss), but because of its changes to demons and devils.

It actually turned out to be a lot easier than I

expected to take Eberron’s unusual cosmology and fit it to the universal chassis. You’ll see how it all turned out with the release of the *Eberron Campaign Guide* this summer, but I’ll give you a teaser. You know how Eberron’s planes all have both names and titles? Like “Kythri, the Churning Chaos” or “Ferna, the Sea of Fire”? Well, how about “Thelanis, the Feywild” or “Dolurh, the Shadowfell”? Ferna and Risia become regions within the Elemental Chaos, while a lot of other planes are now Astral dominions. We managed not to lose any of the plane names from 3rd Edition Eberron.

About the Authors

Richard Baker is an award-winning game designer who’s written scores of D&D adventures and sourcebooks, including the 4th Edition *Thunderspire Labyrinth*™, *King of the Trollhaunt Warrens*™, and *Manual of the Planes*™. Rich is also a bestselling author of FORGOTTEN REALMS® novels, including *Swordmage*, first book in the new Blades of the Moonsea series.

James Wyatt is the D&D Design Manager for Wizards of the Coast Roleplaying R&D. He was one of the lead designers for 4th Edition D&D and the primary author of the 4th Edition *Dungeon Master’s Guide*®. He was one of the designers of the *EBERRON*® Campaign Setting, and is the author of several Eberron novels.

THE LONGEST NIGHT

BY CHRIS SIMS

illustrations by William O'Conner

Red dragons are the most powerful of the chromatic dragons, and they know this. Such is their strength that they seem born to arrogance, belligerence, fearlessness, greed, and cruelty. Most red dragons believe that a creature's right to wealth is equal to its ability to defend and keep those riches. Further, few are brave enough to face a dragon. Fewer still are willing to match wit, sword, and spell against a dragon that is burning wrath incarnate. Lack of opposition leaves a red dragon able to exploit weaker creatures.



For most red dragons, this freedom means the ability to act without regard for others. It means the power to take what is wanted, and even destroy the rest. Few red dragons go beyond raiding for food, slaves, sport, and treasure.

But what if a red dragon did go beyond this simple rogue lifestyle? How about if it required regular tribute, which it collected in an organized and consistent manner? If it terrorized a small, poorly defended community or set of communities, it could be very successful. Only the bold and mighty would dare to oppose the beast. Even so, such stalwarts would have to be careful. Simply injuring or offending the dragon is the surest way to horrific suffering among its “subjects.”

This scenario is intended for 11th-level PCs. It should give the PCs a chance to rid Nentir Vale (Dungeon Master’s Guide, page 206; setting of the H series of D&D® adventures) of a significant threat. They might also gain an artifact and base of operations to call their own.

HARKENWOLD

The Barony of Harkenwold, in southeastern Nentir Vale, is set of villages situated along the White River or a little-used branch of the Kings Road from the days of Nerath. The elderly Baron Stockmer Harken rules this realm, which is nestled on rich farmland between the Harken Forest and the Dawnforge Mountains. Although Baron Stockmer is a just ruler and was a decent warrior in his day, he has no heir. His lands are in decline, because Harkenwold has a dragon problem.

HARKENWOLD VILLAGE

A wilderness of rolling plains surrounds this rugged settlement.

Population: Approximately 700; another 1,500 live in five smaller villages situated about a day’s travel on foot from Harkenwold Village. Humans, halflings, dwarves, and elves are common in the area.

Government: Baron Stockmer Harken cut Harkenwold from the wilderness in his youth. Although he’s elderly, he still runs the government and the court from his seat in Castle Harken.

Defense: The baron keeps twenty-five warriors as an active guard, and each smaller village has about ten guards. He can muster 200 militia for war.

Commerce: Farming, woodcutting, wood goods.

Boarding House: Nanse’s House.

Supplies: Harken Goods.

Temple: None—Cazakk killed the priests and burned the temple, which was a shrine to Pelor, Erathis, and Kord. He forces Harkenwold to maintain a shrine to Tiamat.

CAZAKK THE BLESSED

Born in a faraway land, Cazakk came to the Nentir Vale only a few years ago. Raised among dragons that venerate Tiamat, the red dragon brought with him a piety and a drive unusual among dragons. He sees himself as a crusader for Tiamat, and he enforces conversion with fire, fang, and claw.

Considering all he can survey from his mountain home, including the lowlands of Harkenwold, to be his demesne, Cazakk acts as a tyrant. He demands tribute, and he tolerates no public religion other than the veneration of Tiamat. His faith worsens his inborn greed, viciousness, and arrogance.

Among the citizens of Harkenwold, as well as the elves and goblins of Harken Forest, the dragon takes the title “the Blessed.” He requires this honorific based on his piety and service to Tiamat, which he forces all his subjects to share.

Cazakk flies over Harkenwold and Harken Forest at irregular intervals. He keeps an eye out for any sign of rebellion. If he finds any such indications, he makes severe examples of anyone involved. He rewards informers, but few are willing to give their fellow citizens over to the merciless dragon. Even though Cazakk has severely punished those who said an informer “simply died” one season, would-be informers fear reprisal from other people.

Having placed Harkenwold under his influence, Cazakk has now set his sights on the wider valley.

SOLSTICE IN HARKENWOLD

Although Cazakk can appear at any time to collect tribute or food, his cruelest custom is to fly over Harkenwold and Harken Forest on the eve of the winter solstice. During the darkness of this longest night of the year, he soars from village to village, collecting all the tribute he can carry. Anyone who offends or fails to offer something up to Tiamat’s blessed representative dies. Cazakk often includes whole families accountable for the transgressions of one member. When morning comes, at least a few homes are reduced to ashes, along with their inhabitants. The folk of Harkenwold are left to suffer for the rest of the winter, often short on supplies. Rather than a celebration of the ascent to spring, the traditional Winter Festival is a bitter time for all the citizens of Harkenwold.

FELLING CAZAKK

Having heard of the PCs’ great deeds, Baron Harken sends for them before the winter solstice. Together with Lady Jelenn of the Woodsinger Clan, Baron Harken begs the PCs to put Cazakk the Blessed to the sword. As a reward, the baron offers no less than to make the PCs his heirs. (If that’s too much or undesirable, he can offer money equal to a parcel you assign.) Lady Jelenn offers the lasting military support of her clan to Harkenwold, as well as a treaty to help the folk

of Harkenwold utilize the Harken Forest—which the elves call the Windsong Forest—in a balanced way.

Through captured goblins, Jelenn also knows where the dragon lairs. If the PCs surprise Cazakk on the solstice, but the dragon flees, Jelenn can help them track Cazakk back to his abode. Doing so is a must, because Cazakk's revenge will be terrible indeed if he is allowed to recover and return. Jelenn can also tell the PCs where to find the lair so successful dragon slayers can recover the beast's hoard. She warns that the dragon sometimes flies with "Tiamat's fiends"—abishai—at its side. Cazakk's lair is not uninhabited even if the dragon is dead.

Major Quest: Removing the dragon as a threat and clearing his lair, as well as returning stolen goods to Harkenwold, are a major quest for the party.

DAGGERBURG GOBLINS

The Daggerburg goblins (see *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 207) are enemies of the Woodsinger Clan, as well as a threat to Harkenwold and other parts of the Nentir Vale. They are, however, of little danger to the PCs. Cazakk visited them a year ago and allied with them, becoming their *de facto* chief. He takes tribute from the goblins each year, but his presence has emboldened the goblins to act against the Woodsinger Clan. You might use this fact as fodder for lower-level adventures in the Harkenwold area. When the dragon is dead, the goblins are diminished considerably, and the Woodsinger elves can focus on driving the foul creatures westward.

ENCOUNTERING CAZAKK

Cazakk flies out of the mountains early in the day to start collecting tribute early, timing his arrival in Harkenwold Village for midnight as always. Villagers are supposed to be collecting in the town square for the tribute gathering. If they're not present, Cazakk starts to burn the settlement. On the other hand, the PCs can surprise Cazakk by hiding among the gathered peasants and revealing themselves at the last minute. If the PCs gather with the peasants, they can also talk to Cazakk if they wish.

Finding armed strangers in Harkenwold Village gives Cazakk pause. He'll listen to talk for a moment or two. After that, unless the characters convince him otherwise, he's likely to demand they too give him tribute. Unless the PCs plan to pay the dragon, the best they can hope for then is to stall Cazakk long enough for the villagers to move away from the dragon so they can flee when the battle begins.

ROLEPLAYING CAZAKK

Cazakk is talkative, but he's rude and provocative. He thinks humanoid such as the PCs are beneath him and is destined to serve. When speaking, he indicates he is Tiamat's consort and sings his goddess's praises. If he is somehow impressed with the PCs before a battle occurs, he might offer them positions as his heralds to the Nentir Vale.

In battle, he mocks the PCs, and he laughs at their pain. He is especially amused at any death he causes. The dragon prays to Tiamat, and he speaks of the horrors he will visit upon Harkenwold once the PCs are slain. He swears to find everyone and everything the PCs care about and "put it to the flame." The thing is, he isn't kidding. Those who allow an offended Cazakk to survive gain a lifelong enemy.

Cazakk the Blessed	Level 11 Solo Soldier
Large natural magical beast (dragon), red dragon	XP 3,000
Initiative +11	Senses Perception +12; darkvision
HP 580; Bloodied 290; see also <i>bloodied breath</i>	
AC 27; Fortitude 25, Reflex 23, Will 22; see also <i>glacial armor</i>	
Resist 10 fire, 5 cold	
Saving Throws +5	
Speed 6, fly 8 (hover), overland flight 12	
Action Points 2	
⚔ Bite (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire	
Reach 2; +18 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 plus 3d6 fire damage.	
⚔ Claw (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +18 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage.	
⚔ Double Attack (standard; at-will)	
The dragon makes two claw attacks.	
⚔ Snatch (immediate interrupt; usable when an enemy moves into a square adjacent to Cazakk; at-will)	
+16 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 6 damage, and the target is grabbed.	
<i>First Failed Escape Attempt:</i> Cazakk automatically hits the target with his bite attack.	
⚔ Breath Weapon (standard; recharge ☐☐) ♦ Fire	
Close blast 5; +16 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 5 fire damage. Miss: Half damage.	
⚔ Glory of Tiamat (standard; while bloodied; encounter)	
Close burst 5; +16 vs. Will; the target is pushed 3 squares, knocked prone, and dazed (save ends).	
Glacial Armor (minor; encounter) ♦ Cold	
Cazakk gains 33 temporary hit points and a +2 bonus to AC, but his fire resistance goes down to 0. These effects last until the temporary hit points this power grants are gone.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Draconic
Skills Arcana +12, Bluff +13, Insight +12, Intimidate +18	
Str 23 (+11)	Dex 18 (+9) Wis 15 (+7)
Con 20 (+10)	Int 15 (+7) Cha 17 (+8)

CAZAKK'S TACTICS

Cazakk is a typical red dragon in many respects (see *Monster Manual*, page 82), but his claims of Tiamat's blessing aren't exaggerated. He does snatch someone with his quick claws if he can before his turn. Knowing full well that his foes are likely to think him fire resistant, he uses glacial armor right away. (A successful DC 25 Nature or Arcana check identifies the

unusual power, its effects, and that Cazakk has no fire resistance while it's active. A subsequent successful DC 30 check tells the PCs that Cazakk is likely to have inborn cold resistance.) Then he bites the snatch target preferably. Counting on glacial armor to protect him from marks and opportunity attacks, he flies aloft and spends an action point to catch as many enemies as possible in his breath weapon. Cazakk prefers to remain in the air during the fight, but he doesn't let that stop him from making melee attacks. He saves his last action point for when he is bloodied and has his breath weapon charged. At that point, he makes an array of melee attacks along with the breath weapon during the same turn.

While faced with veteran adventurers, the dragon isn't foolish enough to waste attacks by directing them at villagers. However, Cazakk creates as much havoc and collateral damage as he can during the fight. If he can catch villagers or buildings in his breath weapon, he does so.

When reduced to 70 or fewer hit points, he rears back with a roar and unleashes glory of Tiamat to cow his foes so he can make one last attack and then flee. If he escapes, he flies to his lair to nurse his wounds. If the PCs encounter him again during the same day, he has used his two healing surges, regaining 145 hp for each one. Otherwise, Cazakk returns to Harkenwold fully healed on the next day, and he does his best to raze all the villages in his path. He also hunts the PCs during this time.

In Cazakk's Lair: In his lair, Cazakk first attacks the PCs in a 5-foot-wide passage treated with the Easy Passage ritual. Due to the ritual, Cazakk can move and fight in this corridor without squeezing. The passage is 8 squares long and has a platinum hand (100 gp) embedded in the floor. The hand (defenses 5; 75 hp) is a focus for the ritual, and destroying it ends the effect (and reduces its value to 25 gp). Doing so forces Cazakk to flee to his gallery (see "Cazakk's Lair").

In his wide gallery, Cazakk fights much as described above, but he has help. See "Encounters" under "Cazakk's Lair" below.

CAZAKK'S LAIR

An ancient dwarf watchpost in the southern Dawnforge Mountains serves as Cazakk's lair, and it's left for you to design the details. Within are chambers for Cazakk's servants, as well as a large, two-tiered room designed to serve as a festival hall as well as a crossbow gallery. When the place was a dwarf stronghold, dwarves could drive invaders to the room and enter, through hidden tunnels, the upper tier to shoot into the room below. Cazakk uses this room as his personal chamber because it affords him space to fly. The tunnels that lead to the upper tier are guarded and trapped.

ENCOUNTERS

The lair has at least three other encounters. The following encounters are designed to work with the assumption that Cazakk is not present in the lair. If he is, the abishai from the Cazakk's Hoard encounter is part of the Infernal Advisors encounter. Cazakk is part of the Cazakk's Hoard encounter.

INFERNAL ADVISORS

Level 11 Encounter (XP 3,000)

- ◆ 3 inferno abishais (advanced to level 10 elite soldier; Draconomicon, page 211)

CHAMBERLAIN

Level 11 Encounter (XP 3,300)

- ◆ 1 dragonborn fire adept (reduced to level 12 controller; Draconomicon, page 215)
- ◆ 2 firelashers (level 11 skirmisher; Monster Manual, page 104)

- ◆ 2 redspawn firebelchers (level 12 artillery; Monster Manual, page 88)

CAZAKK'S HOARD

Level 10 Encounter (XP 2,700)

- ◆ 1 inferno abishai (advanced to level 11 elite soldier; Draconomicon, page 211)
- ◆ 1 dragonborn gladiator (level 10 soldier; Monster Manual, page 86)
- ◆ 2 hoard scarab swarms (level 10 skirmisher; see below)

Hoard Scarab Swarm	Level 10 Lurker
Large natural beast (swarm)	XP 500
Initiative +14	Senses Perception +15; tremorsense 4
Swarm Attack aura 1; the hoard scarab swarm makes a <i>grasping swarm</i> attack as a free action against any enemy that starts its turn within the aura. This aura deactivates while the hoard scarab swarm is hidden.	
HP 85; Bloodied 42	
AC 22; Fortitude 21, Reflex 23, Will 22	
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks;	
Vulnerable 5 against close and area attacks	
Speed 8, burrow 4, fly 6 (maximum altitude 3)	
Ⓢ Grasping Swarm (standard; at-will)	
+14 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 1 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 damage and is grabbed.	
Coin Meld (standard; at-will)	
Can be used only while at least 1 square in the hoard scarab swarm's space contains gold coins or similar material. The hoard scarab swarm gains total concealment from all enemies as long as it remains within the same space as gold coins or similar material, and it can make an immediate Stealth check to hide.	
Combat Advantage	
If the swarm has combat advantage against the target, the target also takes 2d8 extra damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages –
Skills Stealth +15 (+20 amid gold coins or similar material)	
Str 12 (+6)	Dex 21 (+10)
Con 19 (+9)	Int 1 (+0)
	Wis 20 (+10)
	Cha 9 (+4)

TACTICS

A hoard scarab swarm emerges from a dragon's coins to ambush those who disturb the constituent scarabs. With many grasping pincers, the swarm holds its prey immobile and tears the unfortunate creature apart. When not grabbing prey, the swarm sometimes reenters a treasure pile to gain protection and a sneaky advantage from blending in with the coins. These scarabs learn to identify certain creatures as "allies," and they become agitated when such allies are angered or under attack.

TREASURE

The hoard within Cazakk's lair contains parcels 2, 3, 5, 9, and 10 from level 11, as well as an artifact. It contains a little extra money (149 gp). This list includes only the valuable elements of the hoard—Cazakk has collected a lot of odd junk through his extortion. Add some customized treasure to the hoard so the PCs can return some of this wealth to Harkenwold, especially the trade goods.

- ◆ One paragon artifact of your choice (its magic aura is hidden; see below). This is likely to be an item that is a threat to dragons, such as the Spear of Urrok the Brave or a similar item.

- ◆ One level 14 magic item of your choice.
- ◆ One level 13 magic item of your choice.
- ◆ 1,103 gp, 10,228 sp, 28,401 cp.
- ◆ A shrine to Tiamat with a stone statue of the Queen of Evil Dragons. The statue has 10 garnet eyes (100 gp each). Heaped around its base are the blackened bones of Cazakk's numerous victims.

- ◆ A fire opal (1,000 gp) known as the Eye of Pelor sits on the shrine before the Tiamat statue. It might belong to the burned temple in Harkenwold Village, and its return to Pelor's faithful might garner the PCs another reward.

- ◆ A brass urn (20 gp) depicting humans in a wedding celebration also sits on the shrine. It contains 10 ornate silver rings of various sizes (50 gp each).

- ◆ A bejeweled gold eye wrapped in red silk (100 gp). This is a focus for the Aura Mask ritual protecting the artifact. While it is within 20 squares of the artifact, a DC 27 Arcana check is required to see through the Aura Mask to tell the artifact is magical at all.

- ◆ Bookcases with various books and scrolls. It holds a ritual book containing Aura Mask (250 gp, *Draconomicon*, page 83) and Easy Passage (360 gp, *Draconomicon*, page 85).

- ◆ A darkwood box (30 gp) containing residuum (500 gp).

- ◆ Trade goods worth 2,000 gp. This includes a lot of fine food and drink, as well as other goods the greedy dragon took to deprive his victims.

AFTERMATH

Successful PCs probably end up as successful dragonslayers. Baron Harken and Lady Jelenn give the rewards they offered. The PCs are hailed as great heroes of the vale, having quelled a great threat to its long-term safety.

RUNNING HARKENWOLD

If the PCs ever inherit Harkenwold, they can use it as a base of operations. Occasionally DMs can set up a skill challenge to see if the PCs successfully rule the realm as they see fit. A monetary reward can be assigned to the challenge to represent tax income for successfully running the barony. As they move on to greater challenges, the characters can have a steward rule and face the skill challenge in their stead. If the PCs or their steward ever fail the challenge, something bad might

happen in the area. Regardless, ruling Harkenwold should be interesting for a while. 🐉

IN THE FORGOTTEN REALMS® SETTING

In the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, Cazakk could emerge from the Graypeak Mountains to threaten Loudwater and Secomber. This could bring the heroes back to their roots to save a beloved area before going on to bigger tasks.

SCALES OF WAR

You can add Cazakk to your *Scales of War* adventure path campaign. Instead of the Harkenwold area, Cazakk threatens the dwarves of the Hammerfist Holds. The heroes can deal with the dragon and thereby gain the dwarves of these holds as allies in the war. Previous dealings with the Hammerfist dwarves in "The Lost Mines of Karak" adventure might complicate this scenario. Then again, the dwarves in that adventure might have been rogue members of the Hammerfist clans.

About the Author

Chris Sims started out working for small d20 companies in 2003, then landed a freelance editor gig for Wizards RPG R&D. Wizards finally got annoyed enough by his constant applications to hire him as the *Duel Masters* editor in 2005. From there, Chris wheedled his way into RPG R&D as an editor, and finally became a story designer after masterminding a few choice assassinations. His credits include *Monster Manual*® V, *Secrets of Sarlona*, *Rules Compendium*, and the *Eberon*® *Survival Guide* (thanks, Logan!).



ADVENTURES IN GIFT GIVING

BY SHELLY MAZZANOBLE

illustrations by William O'Conner

PLEASE SIT DOWN before you read this because I have something to confess.

I don't like shopping.

I know! Me not loving shopping? Pick your jaw off the keyboard and let me clarify. It's *holiday shopping* I'm not fond of.

No, it's not the throngs of crowds or the overeager sales people. And nope, despite what Mom says, I'm not agoraphobic. It's the holiday stress that kicks in every year right around Labor Day. The pressure to find the perfect gift takes all the joy out of the season.

Right in the middle of a present-perfect panic attack, a copy of the *Adventurer's Vault* landed on my desk. Eager to take my mind off how many attaché cases and exfoliators for men my dad really needs, I spent a little time flipping through the pages.

And what to my wondering eyes should appear? Pages of weapons, and wands, and adventuring gear! On elephants, griffons, and celestial mares! How about a *mask of terror* or a *symbol of censure*?

"Yes!" I proclaimed as I duck out of sight. "I must go shopping! To the mall! Tonight!"

"Hold on, Sparky," Scott interrupted. "You know those items don't really exist, right?"

Cleary Scott and I don't shop at the same places. I happen to have several pairs of magic boots in my closet right now.

But yes, Mr. Buzzkill has a point. It might prove difficult to come across some of these fine gift items. I can't exactly hit up my local D&D-Mart, can I? Perhaps I could enlist the help of a friend. What exactly does Tabitha do all week when we're not playing D&D anyway? I make a call to find out.

Tabitha: "It's not Wednesday. What do you want?"

Me: "Nice to talk to you too, Tabs. I need your help."

Tabitha: "I'm pretty busy here. I've got about sixteen orc minions hot on my heels and 99% of my party is lying in a ditch somewhere."

Me: "I know, I know, but it's really important. I'm on a deadline. I...uh...apparently needed to get something done two days ago but, umm... I thought I had until next week. Get my drift?"

Tabitha: "Is this another passive aggressive dig at your editor? You know, the more you do that, the worse it is out here for me."

Me: "Right, right. So here's the deal. I want to get some gifts for my friends, but I don't have access to any of the items in *Adventurer's Vault*. Can you hook me up?"

Tabitha: "What's in it for me?"

Me: "Seriously? There has to be something in it for you? You can't just do me a favor? I created you!"

Tabitha: "I'll take 10% of whatever you spend. Plus mileage."

Me: "Ridiculous! It's the holidays! Where's your goodwill?"

Saucy Wench: "Shops are crowded here too, lady. And we don't have the benefit of that Internet thing you humans are so fond of. You ever try fighting your way through a jam-packed department shoppe with a 6-foot tail?"

Me: "No, but I've survived Nordstrom Rack at the crack of dawn on Black Friday. So bite it, Horn Head."

Selfish Turd: "Who you calling Horn Head, Pin Head?"

Me: "Watch it. Did you know it only takes a few minutes to create a new character with the Character Builder? It's fun too."

Pointy-toothed Ingrate: "You wouldn't."

Me: "Say yes, Tabitha."

Ungrateful Wretch: "Story of my life. Humans are always making bargains to increase their power. Here's a deal for you. I've got friends too but...yawn... who needs another arm slot item?"

Me: "You do! You actually used a healing surge the other day! Use protection, young lady!"

Skanky-tailed Buttface: "I'll do a little shopping for you if you do the same for me. Legend has it you humans have your own book of enchanted gifts. I want it."

Me: "What on Earth are you talking about?"

Tabitha: "Skymall."

Me: "Skymall?"

Tabitha: "Order now and I won't need to make payments for 90 days. We should be through this adventure by then. Maybe."

Me: "I wouldn't be so sure. But you've got yourself a deal."

Let the consumerism begin!

SHELLY'S GIFT LIST:

For Adam (The Chronically Sniffled)

You'd think Adam spent all of his time in airplane bathrooms and drinking out of public water fountains for the number of germs he seems to be toting around. And like all good sick people, he seldom has the sense to stay in bed. What fun is there in staying home when you can stand in your friends' cubicles lamenting (not to mention sharing) your latest illness. I feel for you, my friend, I do. But you've got the immune system of a gnat.

Fear not, my infected friend, I've got a *belt of vitality* with your name on it. They don't come cheap, but it's probably less than you're dishing out for insurance co-pays. Plus, I think you're worth it. Wear this magical band and you'll double your immune system's potency. And it's guaranteed to spiff up any outfit.

For Scott (The... Wait. What was I Saying?)

Attention, Mr. Rouse, attention! Will you please meet you party in the catacombs? While Adam may possess the immune system of a gnat, Scott has the attention span of one. Right in the middle of a really good story he'll short circuit and either move on to a different really good story or fall into a deep meditative state. Focus, Scotty! Eye of the Trihorn!

I can't wait for Scott to unwrap his brand new *cognizance ring*. Not only will his mind and spirit flourish, but he'll gain a +5 bonus on saving throws against updating your Facebook status on your iPhone. At least we'll have our friend back and finally hear what happened that "one Halloween in 1978."

For Marty (The Court Jester)

Marty makes an excellent bard because when he sings a *majestic word*, he really belts it out. Sometimes in the likeness of Bea Arthur. Additionally, his freakishly large mental capacity for D&D nuances often rivals that of New DM's, and he's a veritable font of random knowledge. Do you know what the scientific term for "speaking in tongues" is? Marty does. Glossologia. For Marty, I found the *face-stealing ring*, which will prove useful for his other passion—acting. Marty's a busy guy with work, school, and three different D&D campaigns running simultaneously, so he seldom has time to audition. This is a huge loss to audiences everywhere. With this enchanting accessory, Marty can skip those tedious rehearsals and instantly take on the exact appearance of another creature. See you at the wrap party, suckers!

For Sara (The Menacing Mom)

Sara doesn't just play a dragonborn paladin in D&D; she plays one in real life. She skates on a roller derby team, teaches self-defense, and is exactly the kind of person you want to stand *behind* when your friends read about how you outed their pesky ailments in a digital magazine column.

People are afraid of Sara. In reality, she's charming and sweet and utterly amused by this reputation she's cultivated. Don't get me wrong. If pressed, she will playfully put you in a headlock and sweetly tell you where to go. Personally, I adore her but I can also see how some people (with the initials H.R.) might misconstrue her actions. For her protection, I offer a choker for the choker. The *peacemaker's periapt* is more than a just a pretty piece of jewelry. This amulet will enhance Sara's diplomacy so even the lamest layman can appreciate charms. (And maybe avoid a headlock if they're lucky.)

For Kieren (The Office Enforcer)

You know those rulebooks you're referencing? That adventure you're running? Those minis you're painting? You can thank Kieren for them. (Thanks Kieren!) As Brand Manager for Product Development he's responsible for getting all these fine products into the marketplace. No, he's not actually sitting at a desk sculpting minis and writing campaigns, but he does work with those who do. Closely. On an hourly basis. It ain't easy. Everyone's got an opinion but only Kieren has the budget. If anyone needs a *shield of shared suffering*, it's this guy. He's rubber, you're glue and when he says "feel my pain," he'll mean it.

For New DM (The Guy Who Pretty Much Does Have Everything)

Even with access to all the goodness within *Adventurer's Vault*, New DM proves hard to buy for. He could probably benefit from a *headband of insight*, which would allow him the ability to see through our lies. But our dungeon mastermind appears to already have one as evident from conversations like this:

New DM: "Did you use an action point already?"

Anonymous Player: "Nope. Still got one."

New DM: "Really? Haven't used it?"

Anonymous Player: "Honest, New DM, it's still sitting right here."

New DM: "That so? Could have sworn it was you who spent an action point three weeks ago to reroll your *flaming sphere* attack against the orc chieftain."

Anonymous Player (Okay ... Me): "You think?"

New DM: "You rolled a 13 versus Reflex the first time. 19 the second time. It was 4:37 PM. About 53 degrees outside. You had on a green sweater."

Sheepish Me: "Well, if you say so."

Besides, now that he's cut his hair, I can't really see New DM wearing a headband.

Truthfully, the *Adventurer's Vault* is loaded with gift ideas for New DM. Maybe a *rod of mindbending* so we quit second guessing him. Or a *skeleton key* so we'll always be able to get into our conference room on game days, even when it's double booked.

But I pick out a *drum of panic* not just because it will instill fear in all of our insubordinate little hearts, and he can use it when he hosts his next Rock Band weekend retreat.

And Tabitha, my bitter, rebellious little hellion. The perfect gift for her would probably be time-out for bad behavior. Instead, I get her what she's always wanted□ the ability to cast two daily spells a day courtesy of *salve of power*. Plus the salve sounds like it would be good for her skin.

TABITHA'S GIFT LIST:

For Bjorn (The Errant Party Member)

See a dark, vacant corner of a dungeon? Bjorn does, and he's going to check it out. *Alone*. I say let him, but I'm often overruled by the party. He's occasionally good for something, I guess. If anyone needs one of those child safety harnesses disguised as a cuddly stuffed animal backpack, it's Bjorn. I'd get him one too, but no one is willing to hold the other end of the leash. Instead, I get the wandering dwarf a GPS Personal Location Finder. Pocket-sized and personal, Bjorn will always know where home base is with the simple press of a button.

As an added measure of security, I think I'll stuff his stocking with the Identity Pal. This indestructible ID tag acts as a microchip, telling rescuers where to return him should he turn up lost. *Again*.

For Teemu (The Angry Perfectionist)

No one likes to fail a saving throw. Worse yet, no one likes it when Teemu fails a save. Eladrin are supposed to be graceful, elegant, and level-headed. But our patchouli-smelling trust-fund hippy always seems to have his Birkenstocks in a bunch. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for *infernal wrath* now and again, but my pal Teemu is in desperate need of a chakra realignment. For him, I choose the lovely Meditation Grotto of Sorrento. This the perfect place to cozy up to your Melora effigy and get your trance on.

And for when we're on the road, I'll stuff his stocking with a handy Heart Rate Ring. Not only could it easily pass as a manly *war ring*, this handsome accessory is the ultimate mood ring. Teemu will always have up-to-the-minute feedback on how hard the old ticker is tocking. Better yet, the rest of us will know when it's time to duck and cover.

For Anwar (The Do-Good bard on the Brink of a Breakdown)

You know those people who clog the makeover or amateur shrink shows on daytime television? Or maybe you have better things to do during the daytime than watch television. Whatever. Anyway, these people on TV, they're always "taking care of others" and too busy to look in the mirror to notice their roots are showing and they've been wearing the same Keds for 18 years. And how are these altruistic souls rewarded for making the rest of us look bad? With bedroom makeovers and new wardrobes and month-long trips to Turks & Caicos for a little "me-time." Well, we can't afford to send Anwar on vacation! He's the only one in the party who can offer up some healing!

Fortunately Skymall is chock full of goodies that promise to make healing quick and painless and give the overburdened Anwar a little more time to relax under a nice oak tree with his lute. How about

a Nano Wand Scanner to destroy toxins and germs with the simple swipe of the specially patented Nano-UV light? And for those pesky bumps and bruises we encounter on our journey, there's the Extreme Pain Relief Spray. Unlike those unreliable heal checks, lay your hands on this magic spray and kiss your sore ass bye-bye in 30 seconds flat.

All good for the first aid kit, but worthless if he can't get to us in time. That's why Anwar is getting the Go Go Elite Scooter. With its ease of transport and agility through tight spaces, Anwar will be by our sides quicker than you can utter a *majestic word*.

For Freya (The Aggro Paladin with a Heart of Gold)

Freya is always willing to take one for the team. In fact, she insists on it. Unfortunately, running up into the face of evil often puts our beloved dragonborn on edge. Literally. Freya has charged into many battles and sadly lost a few with gravity, which have sent her tumbling into ravines, pits, and deserted dungeons. If anyone needs the Fire Escape Ladder it's her. Portable and practical, what goes down can easily come back up.

When she's not down a well, Freya is especially fond of getting up in some old baddie's grill and wrapping them in a hot dragon breath embrace. To enhance her favorite racial power, I'll be slipping the Powerlung in her stocking. This clever handheld device will strengthen her lung muscles to increase her lung capacity and breath potency.

For Aaeon (The Trailblazing Genasi)

Poor Aaeon. He can't do a thing with that hair. And when's the last time this guy enjoyed a pint of Chubby Hubby. Hot-headed Aaeon deserves to chill out, so I'm giving him the patent pending Freo Skin Care System. This revolutionary skin care regime will help eliminate fine lines, wrinkles, and sun

spots, all with the cool touch of Cold Therapy Skin Care. He'll not only look years younger, he'll feel cooler than a newly hatched silver wyrmling.

For Oso de la Fez (The Inconspicuous, Unauthorized Familiar)

A circus-show refugee, Oso de la Fez appreciates his life on the road *outside* the big tent much more. You'd think the local merchants would be used to seeing familiars hanging out with their owners but you'd be surprised by how many places Oso is not allowed to enter. That goes double for dungeon delving. When it comes to balancing on a big, rubber ball, Oso takes tops honors, but he's probably not quick enough to dodge an errant arrow. Too risky. Because of these things he spends a lot of time outdoors and his fez, stylish as it is, doesn't do much to protect him from the elements.

The least I can do is outfit my best beast in this season's most fashionable warm-weather accessory: the Sock Monkey Hat & Mittens. Not just stylish, Oso will also benefit by traveling incognito. Who wants to hurt a monkey?

For Shelly (The Stage Mom)

She's a bit pushy, too overprotective, and is always pushing me to "take a nap," but she means well. Maybe her dice would heat up if her fingers weren't ice cold. You can't wear mittens while playing D&D (believe me, she's tried) but you can wear the Slanket. She'll be able to wrap herself in generous amounts of polyester fleece all while keeping her hands free to keep moving me away from the bad guys. For the iron-deficient human who isn't afraid of looking like the Kool-Aid man, the Slanket makes the ultimate gift. Hands down.

For New DM (The Unappreciated and Overanalyzed Know-It-All)

You mean the guy that's always telling me I can't use *shield* or I already used my daily or to take 13 points of damage? Sure, he's on my Christmas list too, and I know just the gift for him. He's getting *Dungeon Master 4th Edition for Dummies*. It's a no-brainer for a ... ah never mind. It is the holidays.

There. That was easy. Good thing the holidays are all about the *spirit* of giving so no one will be disappointed by the fact they can't really *see* their gift. It's the thought that counts, right?

Regardless of who is on your gift list or whose list you might be on, Tabitha and I wish merry adventures to all, and to all a good fight.

About the Author

Every year at this time, **Shelly Mazzanoble** can be found in front of her television, crying for the misfit toys. She would gladly accept a Charlie-in-the-box and a bi-polar rag doll.

DUNGEON MASTERING IN PUBLIC: It's SHOWTIME!

BY CHRIS TULACH

illustrations by Eric L. Williams



LAST MONTH, we talked about preparing yourself for Dungeon Mastering in a public place. Maybe you've volunteered some of your time to stop by a game store or you've signed up to help out at a convention. No matter what the situation, it's likely that you'll be running your game in public for strangers, or at least for those that aren't your home game regulars. You're now ready for your event—you've prepared your adventure, packed up the materials you'll need to play, and have arrived at the venue. Now what?

First off, make sure that you arrive on-time for your event. Most of the time, when you DM a game in public, you'll have a set start time for your game. You're going to want to get seated, start placing your tiles, and unpack your dice at least 10 minutes before you start your game, so it's best to arrive a little early. You definitely want to keep the event organizer happy, and you don't want your players waiting too long for you to show up.

At some bigger events, such as conventions, there might be a mustering process for games. Mustering is used to help organize the players into table groups and to assign DMs to those tables in a more orderly fashion. Often times, a marshal is present to direct the mustering process. If a marshal is present, check in with him or her a few minutes before the start time of the game; in addition to directing you to your table, he or she also might have important information or instructions to relay to you before you begin gaming.

Once you get seated and start unpacking for your session, introduce yourself to your fellow players. You're going to spend a fair amount of time together, and it's always a good idea to get to know them a little. You might want to bring a card with your name on it, or if you've been given a badge or name tag, hang it on your DM screen or another prominent place so the players can learn your name. While you're preparing

the play area, talk to the players, chat a bit, and have them introduce themselves to you. Get an idea of the familiarity each player has with the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, which might inform how you later challenge them tactically. It's important to spend this time getting to know one another, since all of you will need a little time to get comfortable with one another. It's always a little awkward to just start a game with little or no introductions; most home groups spend some pre-game time chatting with each other and getting themselves ready to play, and you should encourage that sort of activity here too. Just don't let it carry on too long; once you've finished setting up, get the show started.

While you're preparing for your session, jot down each player character's name and their passive Insight and Perception scores. The last thing you want to do is tip your hand during a scene in the adventure when you're really not supposed to—asking the players for passive Perception while a bad guy is setting up for a surprise attack gives an unwarranted clue as to what's coming, and it slows the game down.

Most adventures start with the assumption that the player characters know each other or have worked with each other in the past. If that's the case, go around the table and have the players describe and introduce their characters one by one to the rest of the group. This helps each player develop in-character perceptions of the other characters and makes it easier for them to immerse themselves in the adventure. It also might give you some valuable clues to help enhance the roleplaying interactions at your table—if you know a character has a certain personality quirk or dominant trait, it's much easier to push the right buttons when roleplaying interactions with that character.

Now, you're off and running. There's great advice in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (in particular, chapters 1–3) about running D&D games if you'd like a little

refresher. However, one thing you'll want to consider as you're running your game is pacing. Make sure you keep on top of the time allotted for your game. You can always speed up combat rounds a bit by letting the players have a limited time to make their decisions during their turn (1 minute is usually plenty of time) or asking them to roll damage with their attacks. If you have optional encounters, you can remove them or reduce the number of foes the PCs fight. Conversely, if things are moving along quicker than you expected, you can always add some more roleplaying interaction in appropriate areas. Generally speaking, if you need to pick up the pace, you should modify combats; if you need to slow it down a bit, add more roleplaying elements or lengthen skill challenges.

Give your players a chance to take a quick break if they need it. It's pretty common for someone to need to pop away to address nature's call or take care of a quick personal matter, like an important phone call. After roughly every 2–3 hours of gaming, you should attempt to schedule a 5 or 10 minute break to give folks a chance to stretch their legs, refocus, or munch on a snack.

There's always a small possibility with groups of strangers that some sort of social problem might arise during the game session. If you have a disruptive situation that develops, try to resolve it with a short break in the action. However, your job is to DM a game, not to be a mediator for disputes. If you feel uncomfortable handling a situation, or if it stalls the game, get the organizer or event staff to help. Don't let the other players' experience with the game suffer; get back into the action as soon as you can.

Make sure you finish your game about 15 minutes before the end of your scheduled time (or possibly more, if you're at a large convention). You'll need some time to hand out rewards the player characters earned, and you'll want to give the players a chance

to “decompress” after the adventure and talk a little bit about it before they head on their way (possibly to another game).

It's very exciting to run a game in a public place. You can learn a lot from watching different groups of disparate players get together. You'll see new tactics, new character builds, and new roleplaying flourishes that can all help you get more from your D&D game. There's also nothing like the congratulations from a group of strangers on a DMing job well done. So the next time you see a store that could use a hand or a convention that's looking for DMs, jump in and give it a try!



About the Author

Originally thought to have been raised from a humble Midwestern family, **Chris Tulach** actually fell to Earth in a meteorite-shaped capsule flung from a planet far outside our galaxy. While under the yellow rays of Sol, Chris's nerdity far surpasses that of any normal human. Using this precious gift only for good, he has recently become the RPGA® Content Manager, responsible for the development and deployment of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® organized play programs.



It's a pretty busy time here at the D&D offices, but I didn't want to miss my opportunity to chat with you this month. Continuing my developing tradition of showing off something cool and exciting to D&D Insiders first, I've grabbed a couple of items to put on display. One is another glimpse of *Player's Handbook 2*, kind of a bookend to this week's druid preview. I'm showing off an epic destiny that the druid (or any other primal character) can aspire to the Primal Avatar. Then, I want to share with you the new-style *Dungeon Delve* monster stat cards that will be included with D&D Miniatures starting in 2009. Each card features all of the statistical information you need so that you can run the monster in your D&D Roleplaying Game adventures. I've pulled two to show off, one familiar monster from the *Monster Manual*, and one new monster that first appears in an upcoming adventure. But before we get to that, a few other topics

CHANGES

On Tuesday, Wizards of the Coast consolidated its digital game organizations, and made a few adjustments in other areas of the company. This resulted in the elimination of certain jobs, including a number of names you may know.

What does this mean for D&D? While the loss of people we've known and worked with for a long time is sad, Wizards continues to be an innovator and leader in hobby games, and our vision for D&D remains the same. We're committed to the growth and success of our core brands. We're committed to D&D 4th Edition, and our slate of roleplaying game products, miniatures, and novels. We're committed to *D&D Insider*, and to constantly improving and increasing the number of digital offerings, including *Dragon Magazine*, *Dungeon Magazine*, the D&D Compendium, and the D&D Character Builder. Our

EPIC DESTINIES AND MONSTERS

by Bill Slavicsek

illustrations by Eric Belisle, David Griffith, and Jim Neslon

products, whether digital or physical, will continue to be the best in the industry.

While we'll miss those who have left the company, and we wish them well, I continue to lead the most talented team of game designers, game developers, game editors, and book editors ever assembled. James Wyatt oversees the design team, which includes veteran staff such as Rich Baker, Bruce R. Cordell, Rob Heinsoo, and Mike Mearls. Andy Collins oversees the development and editing teams. Chris Perkins oversees the *D&D Insider* magazine team. Kim Mohan continues to serve as Managing Editor. All told, I have thirty people working in the building every day to bring you the best D&D RPGs, miniatures, novels, and magazines, and I'm very proud of each and every one of them.

Ken Troop, Didier Monin, and others still keep the technical aspects of *D&D Insider* on track and rolling along. And there is a host of other Brand, Marketing, Sales, Art, Production, and Logistics staff that provide the behind-the-scenes support necessary to bring each product – whether physical or digital – to you each and every month.

That's all still in place. That's all still here. In these challenging times, D&D continues to perform well. From the amazing launch to the release of the latest products, the D&D audience grows and thrives.

As far as 4th Edition and *D&D Insider* is concerned, we're just getting started.

IN PROCESS

My goal has been to review, develop, and do the final edit on each of the adventures we're releasing as part of our initial 4th Edition "adventure path." That's *H1: Keep on the Shadowfell* to *E3: Prince of Undeath*. Right now, I'm putting the finishing touches on *E1: Death's Reach*. This is our first epic-tier adventure, taking characters from 20th to 23rd level as they accept an epic quest from the Raven Queen. Designers Bruce R. Cordell and Chris Sims have put together an exciting and thought-provoking adventure that explores the darkest places in the Shadowfell and touches on the mysteries of life, death, and the beginning of time in D&D. This is one to watch for when it hits the shelves in 2009. After that, two more to go!

CHARACTER BUILDER

If you haven't tried out the D&D Character Builder yet, what are you waiting for? Character creation has never been easier or more comprehensive, and using the Builder is fun, too. Check it out now, and watch for the full version that includes all 30 levels of play and classes and options from all core books, supplements, and e-magazines early in 2009.

NEXT MONTH

For my next column, I'm going to reach a bit further into the future to show off something that the team is working on. In the meantime, give the gift of gaming. You can do this by sharing your favorite hobby in any number of ways, from giving a D&D novel or game supplement or Starter Set to a friend, or by simply hosting a roleplaying game session or two during the holidays. It's a great way to get together and have some fun.

Gotta run now. I'm off to a meeting. Have a great holiday season and may all your dice roll high!

Bill

PRIMAL AVATAR

You are the living embodiment of nature's power, a mighty primal spirit veiled in living flesh.

Prerequisite: 21st level, any primal class

You are one with the world around you. You hear the whispers of the trees as they speak of their ancient dreams, you taste the change of seasons carried on the four winds, and you understand the thoughts of beasts nearby. The world of spirit that exists alongside the physical world is as real to you as your own body; you perceive and move in both realms at the same time. Like the wisest and most powerful barbarians, druids, shamans, and wardens who have gone before you, you have no fear of death, for when you die, you will reside in the spirit world that you already know.

Many primal spirits are benign. Some are heedless of mortal concerns, and others are actively malevolent. Your power and attunement to their world draws these spirits' attention, for they perceive you even as you perceive them. Hostile spirits see you as a threat and seek to hamper your progress. But you have allies in the spirit realm too, friendly powers who nurture

you, lending a measure of their own strength to support your cause. As your power grows, so too does your connection to the spirits of nature, until its sustaining power accompanies you wherever you go.

Your presence in the world has such resonance that a great primal spirit might seek you out to recruit you for a greater purpose. Whether you choose to bind yourself to the entity or not has no effect on your abilities, but service might result in physical manifestations that evoke qualities held by your patron. For example, if you ally yourself with a spirit of the woodlands, your hair might take on a leafy appearance that changes with the passing of the seasons; if you choose to serve a spirit of the hunt, you might acquire a bestial appearance and a shaggy mane; and if you serve an animal spirit of wisdom and guidance, you might grow a stag's antlers or develop hooves for feet.

IMMORTALITY

When your body's life comes to its end, you will continue to exist as one of the spirits of nature.

Mighty Among the Spirits: As you near the completion of your Destiny Quest, you feel the tug of something greater, some deeper force drawing you on and goading you to bring your mission to its conclusion quickly. Not long after finishing your final task, you walk from the world into the spirit realm, leaving your mortality behind. Freed from the bonds of your body, you join the host of spirits that protect the natural order and guide new champions to follow the trail you blazed.

PRIMAL AVATAR FEATURES

Primal Travel (21st level): When any enemy hits you with a melee attack, you can teleport 3 squares as an immediate reaction.

Spirit Boon (24th level): After each extended rest, choose one ability score. Until the end of your next extended rest, you gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks related to that ability.



Eternal Return (30th level): Once per day, when you die and have at least two healing surges remaining, you can will yourself back to life. At the start of one of your turns within 10 rounds of your death, you can spend two healing surges to return to life. You return with hit points equal to your bloodied value and free of any effects that a save can end. You then take your turn normally.

PRIMAL AVATAR POWER

Walk with the Spirits Primal Avatar Utility 26

Your spirit slips free from your body, revealing your true nature.

Daily ♦ Primal**Minor Action Personal**

Effect: Your body disappears, and you appear in spirit form in an adjacent space. While you are in this form, you are insubstantial and gain phasing. You also gain a fly speed equal to your speed, and you can hover. You can use at-will powers and encounter powers, but you cannot use daily powers, magic item powers, or rituals. You can remain in this form until you end it as a standard action, until you drop to 0 hit points or fewer, or until you take a short rest or an extended rest. When you leave this form, your body reappears, rejoined by your spirit, in your current space.

MONSTER MANUAL:
DANGEROUS DELVES

In 2009, *D&D Miniatures* take on a new direction. Smaller set sizes, visible figures, all monsters, and complete roleplaying game statistics make each booster pack even more valuable to Dungeon Masters. Here's a preview of two of the monsters in the first release, as well as the stat cards that come with them.

Bonechill Chimera		Level 15 Elite Brute
Large natural magical beast		XP 2,400
INIT +10	Senses Perception +14; all-around vision, darkvision	
AC 27	Resist 10 cold	
FORT 29	Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
REF 23	⬇️ Lion's Bite (standard; at-will) +18 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage.	
WILL 24	⬇️ Ram's Charge (standard; at-will) Charge attack; +19 vs. AC; 1d10 + 11 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square or knocked prone.	
HP/Bloodied 366/183	Speed 6, fly 10 (clumsy), overland flight 15 Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, Draconic	
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Medusa Archer		Level 10 Elite Controller
Medium natural humanoid		XP 1,000
INIT +10	Senses Perception +13	
AC 26	Immune petrification; Resist 10 poison	
FORT 23	Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
REF 24	⬇️ Snaky Hair (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison +15 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 poison damage and takes a -2 penalty to Fortitude defense (save ends both).	
WILL 25	Speed 7 Alignment Evil Languages Common	
HP/Bloodied 212/106	Skills Bluff +16, Diplomacy +16, Intimidate +16, Stealth +15	
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Bonechill Chimera		(P3 Adventure)
Dungeon Delve Stat Card Side 2		
⬇️ Triple Threat (standard; at-will) Three melee attacks, each against a different target: Dragon's Bite +18 vs. AC; 3d6 + 7 damage. Lion's Bite +18 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage. Ram's Gore +18 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage, knocked prone.		
⬅️ Dragon Breath (standard; encounter) ♦ Cold Close blast 5; +16 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 3 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 cold damage and is slowed (save ends both).		
⬅️ Bloodied Breath (free, when first bloodied; encounter) The chimera recharges and uses <i>dragon breath</i> .		
STR 24 (+14) CON 23 (+13)	DEX 17 (+10) INT 5 (+4)	WIS 14 (+9) CHA 17 (+10)

Medusa Archer		(MM page 186)
Dungeon Delve Stat Card Side 2		
⚡ Longbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison, Weapon Ranged 20/40; +15 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, and the medusa makes a secondary attack against same target. <i>Secondary Attack</i> : +13 vs. Fortitude; the target takes ongoing 10 poison damage and takes a -2 penalty to Fortitude defense (save ends both).		
⬅️ Petrifying Gaze (standard; encounter) ♦ Gaze Close blast 5; blind creatures immune; +14 vs. Fortitude; the target is slowed (save ends). <i>First Failed Save</i> : The target is immobilized (save ends). <i>Second Failed Save</i> : The target is petrified (no save).		
STR 16 (+8) CON 18 (+9)	DEX 21 (+10) INT 12 (+6)	WIS 17 (+8) CHA 22 (+11)